

**BY THE WATERS
OF CARTHAGE**

NORMA LORIMER'S
FAMOUS ROMANCES

Small Crown 8vo. Cloth. 2s. net.
Picture Wrappers

ON ETNA
MIRRY-ANN
JOSIAH'S WIFE
THERE WAS A KING IN EGYPT
CATHERINE STERLING
A WIFE OUT OF EGYPT
THE GODS' CARNIVAL
ON DESERT ALTARS

Stirring, picturesque, glamorous—and popular

LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO. LTD.



|Frontispiece

TUNIS AND THE TWIN PEAKS OF ROU-CORNEIN

BY THE WATERS OF CARTHAGE

By NORMA LORIMER

Author of "*BY THE WATERS OF SICILY*"

"*BY THE WATERS OF EGYPT*," *Etc., Etc.*

With Coloured Frontispiece by
BENTON FLETCHER and 32
Illustrations from Photographs
by GARRIGUES of Tunis

London: STANLEY PAUL & CO. LTD.
8 Endsleigh Gardens, Upper Woburn Place

All rights reserved. New and Revised Edition

1925

PREFACE

By the Waters of Carthage is in a way a sequel to *By the Waters of Sicily*. The same Doris appears in both books—but she is now married to the writer of the letters in *By the Waters of Sicily*, and the present volume consists of letters written by her to him.

By the Waters of Carthage deals with the unhappy life of an Englishwoman married to a Moor of Tunis, and gives pictures of the life and sights of Tunis and ancient Carthage.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

TUNIS AND THE TWIN PEAKS OF BOU-CORNEIN .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
A CAMEL-DRIVER	18
TYPICAL JEWISH MARRIED WOMEN	24
A STREET IN THE BAZAAR OF TUNIS	32
A RICH PERFUMER'S SHOP IN THE TUNIS BAZAAR	40
A MINARET IN THE BAZAAR	52
MARKET OF THE DAR-EL-BEY IN THE BAZAAR AT TUNIS	56
A MOORISH DOOR, STUDDED WITH NAILS, BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR CHARLES V.	58
MIDDLE-CLASS ARAB WOMAN	70
PLOUGHMAN	74
BEDOUIN JEWELLERY	90
THE MARABOUT'S TOMB IN THE SOUK OF THE SADDLERS	94
THE TOMB OF A MARABOUT (SAINT)	114
THE SOUK OF THE POTTERS	126
ARAB GROCERY	130
THE PLACE BAB-SOUIKA AND MOSQUE SIDI-MAHREZ	132
LACEWORK IN PLASTER	134
THE LIONS' STAIRCASE AT THE BARDO	158
OASIS IN THE TUNISIAN SAHARA	166
THE PATIO OF THE BEY'S PALACE (DAR-EL-BEY) AT TUNIS	172
THE CAFÉ IN THE PLACE HALFAOUINE	190
VIEW OF TUNIS FROM THE DAR-EL-BEY	196

	FACING PAGE
THE AVENUE DE FRANCE AND PORTE DE FRANCE, TUNIS .	204
JEWS MOURNING IN THEIR CEMETERY	210
LOWER-CLASS ARAB WOMEN	214
GROCCERS' SHOPS AND THE ZITOUNA MOSQUE IN THE TUNIS BAZAAR	216
THE SUMMER-HOUSE IN THE BELVEDERE—VIEW OF TUNIS .	224
THE BYRSA OR CITADEL HILL OF CARTHAGE	236
THE ENTRANCE TO A RICH ARAB'S HOUSE IN THE MEDINA .	242
A BEDOUIN ENCAMPMENT	266
THE NAVAL AND COMMERCIAL HARBOURS OF CARTHAGE, WITH BOU-CORNEIN IN THE DISTANCE	268
BULLOCKS DRAWING WATER IN THE ANTIQUE WAY AT CARTHAGE	276
THE PATIO OF DAR HUSSEIN, TUNIS	308

BY THE WATERS OF CARTHAGE

CHAPTER I

TUNIS, *May 12, 19—.*

MY DEAR HUSBAND,

The first glimpse of these muffled and veiled women makes me thank God for my Christian husband, who not only admits that his wife has a soul, but allows her to possess it in liberty, fraternity, and equality with his own. All the same, I don't miss you enough ; but when the day has given me Tunis and a distant view of Carthage, and I have actually set foot on African soil, how could I miss anything ?

I wanted you as we were passing the Gulf of Carthage, when a flight of flamingos gave me my first thrill of certainty that our ship was indeed nearing strange shores. You know how much I hoped that it would be all strange and different, and truly I have found almost more than I asked for in that respect. We were stealing with smokeless silence up the stave-marked channel in the Bay of Tunis ; yellow Carthage and St Louis' white cathedral were on our right, and the flat-roofed city of Hammam-lif, just showing under the distant heights of Bou-Cornein, on our left, and straight ahead the minarets and domes of Tunis, as white and glittering as any mortal city could be. Too much classical imagination was necessary for the re-establishing

of Carthage in the landscape. I had to satisfy my hunger of expectancy with the parched and barren rather than with the grand or picturesque, for the Bay of Tunis is not imposing from the entrance, so this migration of flamingos saved the situation. Tunis is built on a narrow strip of land which has a salt lake on either side of it, and one of these lakes, El-Bahira, is the home of flamingos and pelicans. This is what I read in the guide-book afterwards; but what I saw was long strips of flat yellow land coming down into the sea on our left, with very high mountains in the distance, rows of white posts for the ships to sail between, and Tunis right ahead. As for Carthage and its gulf, there is more in the name than in the site as it greets you from the sea.

Someone on deck said: "Look at the sky, it's all pink." Then from somewhere another voice said: "Oh, it's all white again"; then a third cried: "Look, quick! how extraordinary!" I did look, and the sky overhead was as pink as though a rose limelight had been turned on it. At that moment a long-legged Anglo-Saxon, who has a pretty little Belgian wife, put up his marine glasses, and after a few moments' silence growled out: "Flamingos." The prettiest of little white hands were held out to take the glasses, but the "Angry Saxon," for so I have christened him, turned on his heel and took the glasses with him. He evidently took no pleasure in flamingos, for his was the only head which did not turn and twist and crane to catch each effect of colour as the birds flew over the flatness of barren marshland and purple sea. I wonder if we caught them in the act of migrating to cooler shores;

the captain thought so, for this is just about the date of their annual departure. They had formed a solid triangle in the sky, with the apex of the angle extended by the pioneers of the party, who led the way in single file. As they swerved and swooped with the wind, they showed white or pink alternately, for they have pink under their wings as well as on their long legs. I had made friends with the little Belgian woman the night before at *table d'hôte*. I wished to find out why she had married the bull-necked Englishman. She turned suddenly to where I stood and said :

"Do you not admire their pretty stockings? I like them so very much."

"I should like to have half-a-dozen pairs just like them," I said.

She laughed, and came a little closer. "I am pleased to talk with you; I admire such things—I cannot help it."

"And why should you?" I asked; "does your husband never admire anything?"

"I never heard him," she said; "he is like so many of your countrymen, who always travel, but who never find anything to admire out of their own country."

The Angry Saxon has been in our beloved Sicily for four months, and he has hated every day of it. When I asked him why he had stayed so long, he said :

"Because it was too much bother to make arrangements for getting away with such a pack of lying scoundrels."

"What about Taormina?" I said. "You mustn't judge all Sicily by Palermo."

By the Waters of Carthage

"I never moved out of Palermo," he said; "that was quite enough for me; I didn't want any more."

I turned to "la petite Belge."

"Did you go to the other places?"

"No, my husband allowed me to go alone" (the words were spoken in apology for him), "but *you* know it is not possible?"

I laughed.

"No, with you, it certainly wouldn't be possible. In Sicily one must not expect too much."

"And you," she said, "you find it possible?"

"Not always," I said, remembering the day when you rescued me from the ardent poet at the Gesù. (I often smile over that lost epic, and the much-bespattered figure.)

"I enjoy so much to see every place," she said, "and to make many travels in the country, but my husband always says: 'Well, go by yourself, I will wait here.' Once I said: 'Yes, I *will* go by myself.' I was to go by electric tram from Palermo to Monreale. . . ." She stopped, and turned to where her husband was standing looking through his glasses. He had been listening, and finished her sentence for her—"Well, go on; they were all such damned cads that you had to take a cab and drive back as quick as you could."

"Well, poor things, and how were they to know that I had a big husband at home when he allowed me to go so far alone?" All the same, she said confidentially: "It was my hat; it was new, and very becoming."

"In England you can go about all right alone even if you *have* got on a new hat; it is only these impudent

jackanapes with their gingerbread manners and theatrical moustaches—terrific bounders, all of them.”

“Yes, in England, Jean; that is quite right. I can go about alone; but it was you—you wanted to leave England. I like it—oh, so much! Next to Paris, I think it is the best place I have travelled in.”

“I left England,” he said, “because the author of some rotten book you got hold of said there was always sunshine in Palermo, if there was sun anywhere in Europe. The only good thing in Sicily,” he said, “is the pepper.”

“The pepper?” I looked at the man; he must be mad.

“Yes,” he said, “I’m not making a joke; I mean what I say. It’s such a beastly hole, I was only too willing to give it credit for the smallest virtue it possessed; it has absolutely no virtues, but I found that one good thing. I can’t explain why, but Sicily has good black pepper.”

“Good heavens!” I said to myself; “imagine living with such a being. He calls himself an educated Englishman, and he prefers good black pepper to King Roger’s golden chapel, or the seven temples of Girgenti, or to the incomparable Bay of Palermo!” And again, dear, I thanked God for you.

All that this man ever sees, he looks at through opera-glasses for about ten minutes. He then closes up the glasses and dismisses the object for ever from his mind, and keeps his eyes and ears resolutely closed in case he should absorb the smallest atom of intelligence.

“Why do people marry?” I ask myself a dozen times

By the Waters of Carthage

each day. About one out of every hundred couples seems to have had any particular reason for doing so. Of course, *we* are one of the elect couples.

But how I do get away from the point. I was trying to tell you of our landing, which was the orientalest thing imaginable, but the Angry Saxon got in the way. When we had lost sight of the flamingos and had taken as long as a ship could possibly take to crawl up the channel, we were by slow degrees moored to the landing-stage. It seemed to me that the ship would be stormed and every one of us devoured by the army of gesticulating, yelling, brown-skinned Orientals, who were hailing our approach with glittering eyes and outstretched arms. Why do the docks of all countries, I wonder, collect the offal of humanity? During the rest of the day here I have not seen anyone the least resembling these desperate wretches who gave us our first welcome.

I was just a little appalled at the idea of landing in what seemed to me the very heart of the Orient without you, and for one moment I wondered if I had done a foolhardy thing to come alone.

In that sea of faces there were Nubians as black as coal, and their paler brethren the Berbers, in brown and white jebbas or white French shirts let loose over wide white drawers, their limbs as skinny and withered as the grey stumps of ancient prickly-pears; Arabs, with their effeminate fineness of feature, fallen to such low estate that they are actually driven to doing hard work and forced to haggle and fight like no true children of Allah for the baggage of unbelievers; Jews, of every cast of ugliness, yet all bearing the unmistakable hall-mark of

their marvellous race; Maltese and Sicilians, the most despicable and only unpicturesque figures in the crowd.

What an introduction to the Orient, that mass of mahogany-toned blackguards! But the colour! That was the surprise and joy of it. The black and blue and orange turbans, the crimson sashes, the flowing green robes, the exquisite blues of the better-off Jews; the gay yellow and crimson slippers, the faded and tattered browns and the pale flesh-tints of fine cloths which had long since lost their original splendour; and, what was best of all, the biblical-looking figures of the bearded and burnoused Arabs, in their fine white turbans, standing a little distance off, looking on at the eager, starving dock loafers. As I watched them, I wondered if I should make anything of it all during my short visit here—if I should even be able to peep behind the veil which separates the East from the West. Everything is of course a terrible jumble; it seems as if it would take years to disentangle races, customs, grades, habits, types. Colour, colour, colour is the effect it all produces on your mind.

My two pieces of luggage were carried along with the Angry Saxon's five pieces on the back of a Berber whose head did not reach above the top of my second box, yet he swung along with this tower of trunks on his back as though it was a part of his own being, while we followed him in a carriage drawn by a pair of horses.

And now that I have got you as far as the door of my hotel, which is just inside the horseshoe gate (I know, dear, that the correct word is stilted arch, but when these Tunisian arched gateways are just the shape of

horseshoes, why not call them so?), I will leave you—until to-morrow. Outside that gate Tunis is French and modern, only sprinkled here and there with touches of the Orient; inside the gate it is—well, if I begin to say what it is, where shall I stop? for the whole Orient seems to pour through it unceasingly.

Yours, DORIS.

CHAPTER II

TUNIS, *May 13, 19—.*

OH, MY DEAR !

Come, and take me to the desert ; it lies over there, in the great Beyond, like Death—waiting—waiting—waiting.

I have seen camels in their proper atmosphere, leading their common everyday life of indifference, though so far, I must admit, I have not seen them trying to get through the eye of a needle. These strange supercilious leavings of the prehistoric past are almost as scornful of mankind as new-born babies. A horse looks as foolishly modern beside a camel as an Englishman in his blue serge suit looks beside a burnoused and biblical Moslem.

I have heard the muezzin, the city call to prayer, cried from the little minarets at daybreak and after sunset. I scarcely allowed myself to sleep last night in case I should miss it this morning. What a beautiful call it is ! My guide translated it for me yesterday, and so when I listened to it in that mysterious hour between daylight and darkness, and watched the white figure of the Arab walking round the arcade of the tall minaret as he called it out to the faithful in the sleeping city below, I said it in English to myself—"Allahu Akbar, God is most great ; prayer is better than sleep, prayer is better than sleep ; there is no God but God, and Mohammed is His prophet."

I have been in the souks (bazaars), and it is true that there above all other places you can hear the East

By the Waters of Carthage

"a-calling"; it is there that you forget that Tunis is under French protection and that it has fine boulevards and theatres and a Petit Louvre, for all that is on the other side of the horseshoe gate (the Porte de France, as it is called), and my hotel is within it. It is in the bazaars before midday that you get a glimpse of how the people live, for the pulse of the city is there, if an Arab city has a pulse. The thing that strikes one most about these delicate-featured Moors and Arabs is their total indifference to everything except how they *look*; *that* they do care about, for they are one and all dressed like the resplendent heroes in *The Arabian Nights*. My first impression of them is that they seem to sleep a great deal (rolled up like fat pigs in white burnouses on the small floors of their cupboard-like shops), smoke a great deal, pray a great deal, eat very little, and leave Allah to do the rest. Their trust in Allah is profound, and their indifference to Time superb.

But this lofty indifference to the present makes very poor business men of them, and I expect that Allah, like all wise masters, prefers to help those who help themselves; and while the Maltese and Jews cadge for patronage and pester you to look at their goods, even if you don't mean to buy any, the Arab sits in scornful silence, surrounded by his wares, waiting till Allah sends a customer. Among all the five hundred mosques in this city, which is less than quarter his own, the Arab refuses to let the unbeliever put so much as his Christian nose into any one of them. In Kairowan they are open to everyone, the reason being that the French, who in Tunisia have been wisely tolerant and respectful of Mohammedan



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

A CAMEL-DRIVER

[To face p. 18

fanaticism, learned that a plot against them was being hatched in a mosque in Kairowan. By way of exemplary punishment the French commanded every mosque in the city to be opened to the defiling feet of the unbeliever, and they have remained open ever since. But although in Tunis you cannot see the Mohammedans at prayer in their mosques, you can see them reading the Koran in the souks and touching the ground with their foreheads, an act of grace which a true believer is expected to accomplish forty times a day—quite a gymnastic feat, I should imagine, judging by the corpulence of most of them who are over thirty. Arabs are beautifully lean, and such agile creatures, when they are young; they remind me of the early Victorian engravings which illustrate *Lalla Rookh*. They have neat black silky moustaches, long gleaming eyes, lovely white teeth, and well-poised turbaned-heads, but they soon become as fat and sleek as prosperous Chinamen. Yet even when he is fat, who among the sons of men can walk like an Arab? Not one.

My Arab dragoman is splendid; he treats me with as much respect and gentleness as though I were a man and child in one, and as if he really thought I had a soul. In his heart I know he thinks otherwise, but he is too well bred to show it. He has been to Paris and London, and is accustomed to the strange ways of the Western women; but he is still a good Mussulman by religion, so of course I know that he can't think of me as my husband's equal, let alone as the equal of a true believer, even if he is only my paid servant. He is very elegant in his Prussian-blue faced-cloth clothes, the trousers very full and only knee-deep, and a little zouave elaborately embroidered with

black, and such a sash! It is petunia-coloured and made of the richest hand-woven silk, as wide and splendid as the obi of a Japanese mousmé. It is girdled in many folds around his slender loins, and over his left shoulder he carries, more for effect than use, I imagine, an embroidered burnous of the same blue as his clothes. His hat, of course, is the little red fez of the true believer. Would you believe that this little red fez—chéchia, as it is called—which apparently means as much to the Moham-medan as the black skull-cap does to the Chinaman, and which was the last distinctive feature of the Tunisian Arab's dress that the despised and outcast Jews were allowed to adopt, cost as much as two pounds.

Little things mean so much in the East, where the language of signs is as significant and quite as useful to know as the language of words. Even the different colours of turbans, and the way people salute each other when they meet, would open out a new world of thought if one only understood. Long after the Jews were permitted to trade in the souks, and were at liberty to adopt the native dress, they were compelled to wear a *white* fez with a black turban, instead of the little red fez and white turban. One of the longest souks is quite given over to the making of these costly little absurdities. When you finger one for the first time it is difficult to realise the fact that it is hand-knitted, and that in its primitive state it was made of white wool; also, that before it was washed and beaten and dyed and re-dyed, it was of enormous size. You can see youths beating away at them, while they are still white, with little round-headed iron hammers on the tops of nigger-headed wooden posts; their costliness is

the result of the labour it takes to beat and shrink them until they are as thick and close in texture as heavy red cloth. It necessarily takes some days, if not weeks, to convert a big white knitted bag, which looks as if you could strain jelly through it, into a firm, perfectly shaped little red cloth skull-cap.

But there I am, telling you so much about a little red fez, when all Tunis and my first foretaste of the desert are tumbling over themselves with impatience to get to my pen.

But I meant to begin where I left off in my last letter—at the door of my hotel, where the Berber porter, whose dark limbs were covered with little but sunburn, had deposited his pyramid of baggage, and, after receiving his payment, seated himself on the ground, his legs stretched straight out before him and his tired back resting against a white wall. And there he has sat ever since, letting Allah look after his thin limbs when motors or stray camels come round the corner. This morning I told my landlord that I wanted a dragoman, and in less than a quarter of an hour the guide I have already alluded to arrived.

So far it seems to me that all Arabs are perfect gentlemen. When I first saw this elegant person I was a little afraid that he would be too grand for my pocket, and that the amusing, light-hearted half-caste Nubian, in the fine green silk jebba and little else, who fastened himself on to me yesterday, was more the sort of guide for me. I wanted someone of whom I could ask the silliest questions without being thought a fool; besides, I rather liked the nigger's soulless gaiety. But after having spent

By the Waters of Carthage

a long day with Mohammed, who is as dignified and grave as the nigger is foolish and infantile, I feel sure that I have by chance struck the real thing.

And so Mohammed of the grave eyes will henceforth be my Tunisian encyclopedia. If you feel a little sorry for him you needn't, for so far he appears to like it. He seems to be not only an extraordinarily well-educated man, but unusually cultured and refined in his tastes and pleasures, and yet he says he can neither read nor write in his own language; which is a great grief to him. His only trace of personal vanity, and he has reason for a great deal, is his weakness for French shoes a size too small for his slender feet. When I know him better I shall ask him to wear a pair of the Arab slippers of bright lemon-yellow or scarlet morocco leather which will go correctly with his Arab costume. I half promised last night that I would allow the six-foot piece of black foolishness with the bare legs and green jebba to take me through the souks this morning, but at nine o'clock, as he had not appeared, although he protested with many bows when we parted that he would be waiting for me at the door at seven-thirty, I felt free to engage Mohammed. My only difficulty was the money! How was I to discuss such a vulgar subject with so resplendent a person? But his manners being better than mine made the matter easy. About midday I met the green jebba looking very sheepish; my pay had been so generous that he had not left his café until after midnight, and had not waked until eleven this morning.

I told you that my hotel stands just at the mouth of the Orient, that the souks and the native city lie behind

it, and that the Porte de France faces it. My bedroom looks out on the Rue d'Église, which, if you follow it, will take you in less than seven minutes into the souks.

When you are in Tunis you will try to do many things: Carthage will call you; and there is the Jewish quarter of the city, which has for some tourists a certain amount of interest; and the strangest little villages lie on the outskirts of the city; and I must not forget the Bey's fine summer palace. But in spite of all these you will find yourself, if you are at all like me, always drifting back to the souks. They are the spider's web of the city. The Angry Saxon and la petite Belge went to the Hôtel de France, which I hear is excellent. He preferred looking out upon the Europeans in the boulevards and hearing the electric tram-cars to watching the quiet East pour in and out of my beloved gate; and she has long since discovered that however good a second-class hotel may be in respect of food, it is always weak in the matter of wardrobes and looking-glasses! But I know now that until I looked out upon this square I never knew what colour meant. The strength and purity of it in an Oriental city is amazing; splashes of bright lemon-yellow, deep orange-yellow, rose-pink, petunia-pink, sapphire-blue, turquoise-blue, deep crimson, and the sacred green, reserved for the descendants of the Prophet, all move about in and out of the throng of portly white-turbaned figures, who look as if they had stepped out of the Book of Genesis. I recognise fresh biblical characters every day. There is scarcely one you don't meet, from Abraham to the Apostles.

Or if you never moved from the balcony of this hotel you would learn more, I am sure, of the true East in one

day than if you spent a month on the boulevards, for the square is a sort of Oriental bourse which has the two principal streets of the native city opening into it. The first fat tottering Jewess I saw crossing the square took my breath away. I thought the mountain of fat was some freak who would pass out of my sight for ever when once she was on the other side of the Porte de France, so I called Achmet, the Arab waiter. He flew to my side, and he was just in time to catch a glimpse of her "kufia," as the towering head-dress of the Tunisian Jewess is called, and of her voluminous white gauze draperies.

"Seulement une grosse juive, madame," he said, with that smile of his which must have descended from the Prophet.

He is as boneless and noiseless as a cat; and he is always arrayed in voluminous white pantaloons and a spotless white shirt, which set off to perfection the little blue and gold zouave and the gorgeous red of his wide sash. Of course the distinguishing fez is not wanting. But I think I ought not to go into further details about this Achmet of the blessed smile, or that most mountainous Jewess (although I know all about how she is fattened for the matrimonial market on puppies' flesh and oiled liver, and how she is kept shut up, just like a chicken in a coop), until I have taken you up the Rue d'Église and into the bazaars.

What a man's world a Moslem city is! Except for those *grosses juives* and a stray Bedouin or two, you scarcely ever see, in the native quarters, a female thing—even a girl baby. Now and then an elderly Arab woman of the humble class crosses the square. She might be a creature



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

TYPICAL JEWISH MARRIED WOMEN

[To face p. 24]

of any sex or age, for she is nothing but a shapeless bundle of white with a piece of black crêpe where her face ought to be. She is veiled so closely—even though she is certain to be elderly and ugly, otherwise she would not be allowed out—that she can only see the ground in front of her feet ; yet if a man passes close to her she will hold a coloured handkerchief over her dark eyes, which are the only part of her not completely disguised by clothes. These black masks, or “ haiks,” as they are called, are said to be made of plaited horsehair, but they look to me like crêpe. Such a complete disguise as this for an everyday costume ought to be rather helpful in the case of a romance or intrigue, for all women look exactly alike. A man might easily pass his own wife without suspecting who she was if she held her handkerchief before her eyes, but few men would be brave enough to follow an Arab woman or to gaze into her gleaming eyes, for the Tunisian Arabs have always been extraordinarily fanatical about their women and their religion. Yet the Orient, with all this charm of mystery, does not seem to me the least romantic.

And now I must stop talking to you, for Bachir, the hall porter, who sleeps in the true Arab fashion with his body stretched across the inside of the front door of his master's house, has just come up to tell me that an English gentleman is “ en bas ” and that he wishes to see me. The English consul, no doubt, for I know not one English soul on this vast continent of Africa except the Angry Saxon. I hope it is the consul, for I have seen him from *my* balcony smoking on *his* balcony. There has been an English consul in Tunis for two hundred and fifty years, and the present one has all the appearance of an Englishman who could sleep

By the Waters of Carthage

in a Bedouin's camp and bathe in the sand of the desert
(a dispensation which Allah grants to the children of the
Sahara for their ablutions before prayer) without in the
least affecting his British spick-and-spanness.

Yours in haste,

DORIS.

CHAPTER III

TUNIS, *May 14, 19—.*

HUSBAND DEAR,

Who do you *think* it was “en bas” but Jack! Jack . . . years older and ever so much nicer, and on his way back from Egypt!

At first I scarcely knew him, he is so bronzed and thin and manly. When I did recognise him, I was just a little embarrassed, but the humour of the situation saved me, and I felt inclined to say:

“So you didn’t kill yourself after all, Mr Jack? Your turning up like this, looking so fit and handsome, reminds me of an actor smiling and bowing to his audience after a fine death-scene.” But instead, I said in my best married manner: “How do you do? how did you know I was here?”

“I looked in the visitors’ book and saw your name, so I asked that Cheshire cat in the white chemise and canary-coloured slippers what Madame —— was like, and she seemed to be you, so I thought I’d chance it.”

I asked him how the Arab (Bachir) had described me, but all I could gather from Jack was that Bachir put his two fingers to his eyes and then pointed to the sky, which in Tunis is very blue, held up his hands to indicate that I was above the average height, put them almost close together vertically, to show that in *his* opinion I was too thin—and that, by the way, is the greatest blessing, if you are a woman and want to go about alone in Tunis. For

the slender Englishwoman has little or no attraction for the Jew or the Arab, who, like all Orientals, reckon a woman's beauty by her weight. If you are cool-eyed and don't look like the fattening kind, they will, after having passed their gaze carefully over you, leave you severely alone; but if you promise to repay the cost of feeding on puppies' flesh, and are built on generous lines, they will find a cold-blooded satisfaction in imagining you *after* that promise has been fulfilled. This I have already discovered, for I took la petite Belge through the souks yesterday, and it was only too evident that what she said about Sicily applied to Tunis; she could not possibly go about alone.

The Jews were of course positively ill-mannered on the subject, while the young Arabs were merely less scornfully indifferent than usual, and not so willing to leave everything to Allah! Yet Lapie, in his excellent book on Tunis, says, after having described the fat Jewesses:

"Mais ce n'est pas le beauté que les juifs Tunisiens demandent à la femme, c'est la qualité de mère et de ménage, leur Venus n'est pas obèse, l'embonpoint n'est que le signe de la vertu domestique."

This is all very well, but coming from a Frenchman it should be taken with a grain of salt, for he has as a rule much in common with the Oriental in his ideas of feminine beauty. Monsieur Lapie, I should say, likes to buy it by the weight. What an Englishman considers slender, the Frenchman calls "meagre"; what you would think indecently fat he would think comfy and feminine. Of course I don't mean to insinuate that Monsieur Lapie admires these Jewish monstrosities of Tunis; they are an

acquired taste—being freaks, not women. But at the same time I should say that he would not consider the young Arab woman, who has *not* been reared for the market, too fat, as the ordinary Englishman would.

As fatness is considered a token of motherhood and domesticity with the Jews and also with the Arabs, and celibacy a homicidal act, the wretched girls have no choice but to submit to being fed up on puppies' flesh and kept in a room too small for exercise when they arrive at the marriageable age of thirteen or fourteen.

But I was telling you about Jack. He insisted upon carrying me off to see the illuminations in the bazaars for the birthday of the Prophet.¹ This year the fête falls at a season when most visitors foolishly imagine it is too late for Tunis. We saw rather an unusual sight, I suppose; anyhow it was a perfectly lovely one, and Jack and I felt as though we had suddenly stepped into one of the "thousand and one nights." You needn't worry, dear; he has most successfully recovered from all that sort of thing; I am very much the married woman in his eyes, and you know how perfectly safe *my* feelings are on the subject.

As a rule the souks are shut and empty of their inhabitants directly after the last muezzin, which is at sundown. Then the big gates which separate the guilds and divisions of the souks are locked and carefully guarded by night watchmen, who sleep on the projecting roofs just opposite.

¹ The birthday of the Prophet, like other Mohammedan festivals, is according to the lunar calendar, and therefore changes every year according to our reckoning.

There are ten distinct sections in the souks, only distinguishable to the foreigner by the different trades and people. The Jewish quarter is of course easily recognisable; their chief trades are tailoring and curio-selling. There is one open square in the Jewish quarter which has low table-like benches in it where Eastern traders in uncut precious stones bring their wares and wait for the Jewish merchants to come and examine them. But they only sell them to the trade, so there is no chance of me ruining you. Each section of the souks has its Amin or grand master, a sort of justice of the peace, whose duty it is to keep order and settle all the trade disputes which occur in his district. This he does most admirably, for in the souks you seldom hear a word of discord even amongst the Jews; the Arabs of course are too indifferent and dignified to quarrel, and have absolutely no commercial jealousies. The cleanliness, dignity, order, and coolness of the souks are their chief charm. It is such a relief to step out of the glaring intensity of the white city into the stillness and checkered light and shade of these bazaars. They are roofed over with dark wood, but not so closely as to keep out all light and air, yet just close enough to give that sense of mystery and repose which the Arab loves, and which is so restful to the eyes and nerves in a sun-parched country. I can quite understand why Orientals say that only fools and Christians seek the sun.

Last night the bazaars were a blaze of light and colour and as busy and humming with life as a hive of bees. Every hole-in-the-wall shop was open and characteristically decorated and full to overflowing with all sorts and

conditions of men (I speak literally, of course), all in their gala dress. The city Arab who spends his day in his dark shop is pale and delicate-looking, but there is such a strange mixture of blood here that the flesh-tint varies from the beautiful ivory tone of a freshly peeled almond to the grate-polish black of the African nigger, who is descended from the pure Sudanese. The true Arab, when he is exposed to the African sun, soon becomes the colour of your brown boots. I like him like that.

The shops as a rule are so small, except those belonging to the wealthy carpet-merchants, or Jew furniture and curio dealers, that they are little more than cupboards with just room enough on the floor for the merchant to sit cross-legged like a Turk, surrounded by his stock-in-trade. To see what that stock consists of is quite impossible, as everything is folded up and packed away as closely as sheets in a linen-cupboard. Articles are manufactured as well as sold in these bazaars, for almost every native trade is represented here; but even the lovely gauzes and silks worn by the women in the harems are woven in rooms no bigger than monks' cubicles. The shops are all raised up four or five feet from the level of the streets (which are no smoother, by the way, than the streets of Pompeii), and most of them have narrow seats like mounting-stones at each side of their open fronts for customers to sit on and for idlers to enjoy their rest; for the native Tunisian does not only go to the bazaar to shop or to do his business, it is his club and home during the daytime. So these seats, especially at the perfumers' shops, are the favourite gossiping-stools, and are rarely unoccupied. If the Tunisian had to state

in *Who's Who* what his principal places of amusement and attraction were, I feel sure he would say his barber's, his Turkish bath, and his coffee-house—and these are all inside the bazaars. When the owner of a shop or a youthful apprentice wishes to enter it, he catches hold of a rope which hangs just over the front counter (if it has one) and swings himself up and drops like a bird into his well-lined nest.

But to-night, being the Prophet's birthday, the people never left the bazaar, and soon after sundown every seat and shop was full to overflowing with men of all ranks and ages. Grandfathers sat on the floors of their various well-stocked stores, their laps full of darling little boys dressed in the gayest of satins and richest of embroideries, aristocratic little miniatures of their dignified parents, while the younger men loafed elegantly about the narrow streets. I wanted to steal every one of the children, but my guide warned me not to praise them openly, and never to compliment an Arab parent on the beauty or healthiness of his child; this, it appears, is one of their strongest superstitions. If you unknowingly praise an Arab's child, he will quickly raise his five fingers and say "Bismillah!" to ward off the evil eye. I have got quite accustomed to that word already, as it is the exclamation always used to keep off the ever-present evil eye. Everything is really very topsy-turvy to the English mind. It is said, though I have not tried it, if you spat on a child's face you would be doing its father an honour, but if you asked after his wife you would deeply insult him. Spittle seems to have magical properties with the Arabs, as it has with the gypsies. Did I ever tell you



Photo Carrigues, Tunis

A STREET IN THE BAZAAR OF TUNIS

[To face p. 32]

how an old gypsy woman in Cheshire taught me to rid myself of an ugly wart which had established itself for a whole year on my left eyelid? I was to repeat a certain incantation, which I have forgotten now, every morning, and to rub the wart with the spittle which was in my mouth when I awoke. The saliva which collects in one's mouth while sleeping has poison in it, I suppose; anyhow I did what she told me, repeating the incantation faithfully and rubbing the horny wart with my moistened finger, and in less than three weeks the disfiguring thing had completely disappeared.

You can't imagine what dudes well-off Arabs are; there are no such superb young dandies in Europe, with their fine white-silk-stockinged legs and richly embroidered clothes. But you don't need to be well off in Tunis to wear fine clothes, for a poor cobbler who stitches at his trade in a little hole in the wall has his silk sash and blue-faced cloth clothes adorned with silver braid and bell-like buttons. The reason of this male splendour is that in the East things are closer to Nature than in the West; my guide says the women are "as they were made," so here it is the male bird, not the female (as with us), who wears gay-coloured clothes and puts a flower in his hair to attract attention and excite the admiration of the opposite sex.

When an Arab is happy he sticks a carnation over the top of his right ear and does nothing; and he does it so well that who would have him do anything else? Last night they were all doing nothing, and they were all therefore perfectly happy, with that Eastern happiness of chewing the cud of content. A cow lying in a meadow of young grass is the Arab's nearest rival in his expression

of peace and content. To say they were enjoying themselves is perhaps too strenuous a word to use of the soft Arab of the city, who has as few angles and indications of bones about his sleek person as a ripe banana. The older men, who all look as wise and dignified as Moses when he was striking the rock, were, as I said before, seated comfortably on the floors of their little shops, their ample laps filled with their grandchildren, and in front of them little tables of mother-of-pearl or of embossed brass, on which were displayed narghile pipes and ceremonial candles. The young men, without any maidens, were passing in unending streams up and down the narrow streets, which to me seem to lead to nowhere or to anywhere, scarcely ever speaking, but now and then saluting their friends with the degrees of respect betokening superiority, equality, and inferiority. No wonder an Arab has no time to learn either to read or write, when his education in the things which are more important for the amenities of life is so exhaustive. These greetings interested me so much that I have learnt them, and now I know that when equals meet they kiss each other on the shoulders (to see two elderly apostles doing this is really very charming); inferiors kiss their betters on the chest, while a quite humble person will kiss his superior's hand or sleeve, and then touch the kissed place several times with his forehead. The poor people touch their own mouths with their fingers, after having touched each other's hands.

At first I thought that this single carnation or button-like bunch of white jessamine (so cunningly arranged that it looks like a white carnation) which the Arab loves

to wear over his right ear was a token of bachelorhood, that these fine dandies with their gleaming eyes and effeminately elegant clothes sported this coquettish badge as a signal that they were eligible parties; but not a bit of it, for this morning I saw a ragged Berber porter spend one of the precious pennies he had earned, by carrying a piano on his back across the square and up the street to the right of this hotel, on a single red carnation. It evidently gave him great æsthetic pleasure, for I watched him stick the stem of it along the top of his ear, just as a bank clerk sticks his pen, drop his weary limbs in a boneless bundle in the shadow of a rich man's doorway, and give himself up to that state of nothingness which is reserved for the children of Allah. His only piece of clothing was a sack, through which he had thrust his head. But the sweet-scented carnation dangled close to his nose and the doorstep was broad and cool. . . . The tattered element was absent in the souks last night, where everyone seemed to have found a fine garment of some sort with which to do honour to Mohammed, who must have been a humorous as well as a very human person.

Everything was a blaze of light and colour. The merchants of the souks, both Israelites and Mohammedans, had spared neither labour nor money in converting these sombre streets into a very fairyland of Eastern beauty. The rich carpet-dealers had covered the bare walls with carpets as soft and light as silk (one, which was pointed out to me, was worth £2000), while rich draperies, of gold and silver embroidery, floated from every door and glittered from each dark interior. Each shop had its illumination of candles, its text from the Koran, and its

display of costly vases and quaint mother-of-pearl tables or boxes; everything, in fact, that was most rare and precious in the Mussulman's eyes had been set out to make the fête a bewilderment of colour. Nothing is unsuitable in the natives' opinion as long as it is an object of beauty. Chemisettes of fine gauze, transparent scarves of black, spangled with pale night-stars, little velvet caps, so bejewelled and embroidered that 'you would have thought some goldsmith of the fifteenth century had fashioned them, and not a twentieth-century Jewish tailor, all contributed their share of beauty and colour to the *Arabian Nights*' entertainment. One of the prettiest sights was to see a narrow shop, which ran far back instead of broadside on (like a passage with its end blocked up), full of young men and boys listening to the Koran being expounded by a priest or ecclesiastical scholar. The white burnoused turbaned-headed figure sat as solemn as a wooden effigy of Buddha, with its back resting against the whitewashed walls and its feet tucked under it. The popularity of the entertainment was so great that the narrow passage wouldn't hold them all, so they calmly extended the line across the street by spreading out their praying-mats, which they always carry in their pockets, on the street and seating themselves on them, regardless of the inconvenience to the flood of foot-passengers. The expounder sat at the far end of the covered passage with the Koran resting on a cushion in front of him. We stopped and listened for a few moments, but I could see they did not care to let the inspired words fall on unbelievers' ears, so we passed on, feeling ourselves unworthy of the teachings of "The Master of Worlds."

After we had followed the stream of slowly moving Orientals through the intricate highways and byways of the souks, which resemble nothing so much as a glorified Chinese city, Mohammed advised us to accept the offer of a Moorish perfumer, to sit on the two seats outside his shop and watch the crowd and listen to the music of the native band. The band had taken up its position on a long stone bench where the souk beggars sit during the daytime waiting for their basins of kous-kous or date soup, which is daily served to them, but to-night it was covered with pale blue satin and littered with exquisite green silk cushions. Green is the sacred colour with the Mohammedans, but blue brings good luck. Every Arab wears a blue stone of some sort about his person, but it is left for the descendants of the Prophet—shereefs, as they are called—to wear the sacred green turbans. Red turbans signify Mecca pilgrims.

I gladly took advantage of the perfumer's hospitality, although I did not think that the native band would add to the gaiety of things, for in Arab-Tunis a band generally consists of one or two blind and ancient niggers who beat vase-shaped drums made of green glazed pottery. The bottom of the vase is covered with tightly laced parchment. You can buy these picturesque green drums at any pottery shop, straight from the potter's thumb, for about half-a-franc, so you can judge of their fine musical quality. Besides these drums there were last night some twanging instruments, the kind you hear at an exhibition when a snake-charmer wishes to arouse the passions of his hooded cobras; and that reminds me that the snake-charmers in Tunis, and there are many, all wear a little black stone set

in silver to save them from snake-bites; which in its turn reminds me of a story which Mr Francis Carr-Gomme told me of a young Indian girl who was dying from the effects of a snake-bite when he was District Judge of Tinnevely, in South India. Mr Carr-Gomme had been given one of these black stones, which are reputed to have magical powers against snake-bites, by a native before starting on a journey up-country, and as there was (if I remember rightly) no doctor in the neighbourhood in which the girl lived, and everything that was possible had been done to rouse her and to disperse the poison, he thought there could be little harm in putting the amulet to the test. Mr Carr-Gomme himself held the black stone, passing it gently over the actual mark of the snake-bite. He was conscious of a very slight and curious sensation as he did so, but he was not at all prepared to see any favourable result on the patient.

The natives, however, who were watching the proceedings distinctly saw a change pass over the dying girl, so they urged him to continue the treatment and to follow carefully the instructions which had been laid upon him by the Hindu who had given him the stone. In a very short time the girl shook off her lethargy, or whatever form of malady a snake-poisoned patient suffers from, and to Mr Carr-Gomme's great astonishment she "took up her bed and walked."

So really these precious black amulets may be possessed of attributes which we don't understand. In Tunis, black is very much employed to ward off evil. There is one shop here which is entirely devoted to the sale of black amulets, and the black and white of the beautiful Lombard-looking

arcades and arches had its origin in nothing but superstition. Dabs of black paint used to be splashed over the doorways of Arabs' houses, or on fine public buildings if they were beautiful enough to arouse the jealousy of the fates, the idea being that this patch of black was just enough to spoil its absolute perfection. Gradually these black patches took concrete shape until they themselves in turn were used as a form of decoration. This same idea of conciliating the gods exists, if you remember, with the Japanese, who deliberately make some flaw in a piece of workmanship if they think it is perfect enough to excite the jealousy of the gods. I wonder if niggers are perfectly safe from the evil eye?

Our perfume-seller was very good-looking, and dignifiedly conscious of the fact. He was of the pure Moorish type, for the perfume-sellers are, you must know, the aristocrats of the souks, and most of them profess to be of Andalusian descent—that is, they are the Spanish Moors who were driven out of Spain in 1492. Mohammed says they treasure their family papers in the most pathetic way, and that an ancient key, supposed to be the key of their castle in Spain, is handed down from generation to generation, the idea being that it will be required again. Our host was a *bona-fide* perfume-merchant, not merely a professing one, for there are many such in the bazaars who know better than to advertise to the authorities the fact that they are rich enough to live as private individuals on their inherited wealth. They play the game of bluff by starting a perfumer's shop, stocked with empty bottles, ostrich-eggs and gaily painted dye-boxes, and hang a fringe of candles in the form of a curtain from the roof

and call themselves perfumers. As they spend their whole days in the bazaars under any circumstances they may just as well sit in their own little dens as anywhere else and play this game of make-believe.

I have not yet discovered the connection between ostrich-eggs, funeral candles, and scent, but there must be one as there were five empty ostrich-eggs dangling over my head last night while I sat in Monsieur Amour's shop—that being the fine name our host has adopted for the use of commerce with foreigners—and I saw quite a number decorating the ceiling of the perfumer's shop just opposite. Not so long ago (and there may still be some to-day) there were lots of hidden treasures in Tunis—inherited wealth which was buried for the sake of safety. Although the Tunisians hate the French almost as much as they despise the Jews, they have to admit that personal property and life generally are a thousand times safer under French protection than they were in the old days. To me Tunis seems ideally managed. It is one of the safest, cleanest, most orderly, and pleasant towns you can imagine, and the management is so admirable that you never know it is being managed. The workings all come from within like a well-servanted, well-organised household. In Tunis the Europeans can do just as they like, except enter the mosques, raid the harems, or in any way tread on the religious corns of the fanatical natives.

The perfumer whose shop is just opposite to the one we sat in last night belongs, I fancy, to the bluffing order of that aristocratic profession, for I never saw him sell anything all the evening, and during the daytime he has never once sprayed my hat or blouse or veil, when I have

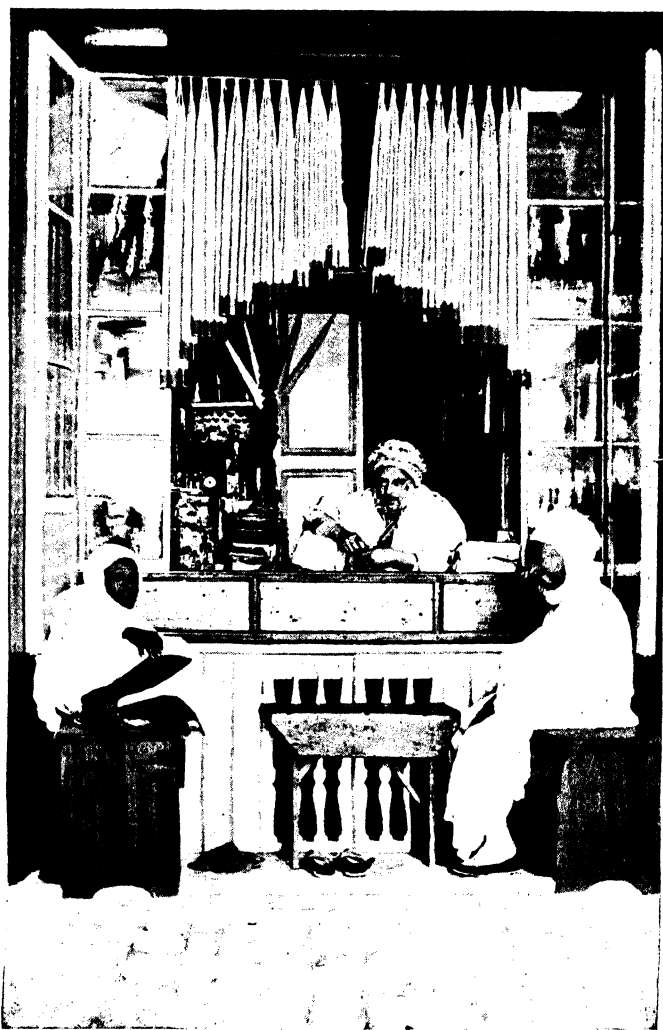


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

A RICH PERFUMER'S SHOP IN THE TUNIS BAZAAR

[To face p. 40

passed his shop, with heavy, scented perfumes. But such a strange thing happened that I must tell you about it before I forget, though first let me mention how surprised I was at the price of these Arab perfumes. I felt compelled to buy some from Monsieur Amour, for he had supplied us with lemonade and delicately scented cigarettes and coffee, and had opened for my inquisitive eyes all the strange closed things in his shop—queer Eastern-looking boxes full of queerer dyes, bags containing musk, and oh! such wonderful scents. The essences of violet and jessamine seem to be the most popular with the Tunisians. I knew they were very expensive, so I thought I would be cautious. Jack wanted me to have a bottle about the size of a two-shilling bottle of eau-de-Cologne, all covered with delicate gold tracery, full of essence of lilac, but I saw Mohammed's eyes open, and the Moor kindly asked him to tell me that the scent was three francs a gramme. Now I remembered that it takes eight grammes to make one ounce, according to the cover of my school exercise-book, but I didn't in the least know what size of bottle would hold an ounce of scent. A very little one, I imagined, for I gathered from the Moor's manner that he had meant to warn me. Before I could say anything more he took from a drawer in the counter a little red leather box, not deeper than a cheap paint-box, full of the tiniest bottles you ever saw, and, picking one out with a pair of pincers, laid it on the scales, and began filling it with scent from a little tube like an ink-sucker. Wishing to be generous, I said, "I will have three grammes, please, Mohammed; tell him not to fill that silly little bottle." But Mohammed only gave one of his rare smiles, for by

this time the little gold-patterned bottle was filled and the Moor was holding it up for inspection.

"Kadesh?" ("how much?") Mohammed asked him.

"Twelve," the Moor answered in pat English. He knew his numerals perfectly, but nothing more.

I turned to Mohammed. "What! twelve francs for that idiotic little bottle," I said, "when the perfume-sellers spray you with scent all day long for nothing? I think our seats have been quite expensive."

"The bottle holds four grammes," Mohammed said, "but it is so strong that one drop would make a large bottle of ordinary scent. You must only press the glass stopper on your handkerchief or hand, or you will be overpowered. That little bottle will last you a year."

I accepted the truth of his remark, for I remembered that the blouse which I had worn the first time I walked through the bazaars still smelt heavily of violets because a perfume-seller had given it two little dabs with the tiny glass stopper of a scent-bottle.

These perfume-venders may be the aristocracy of the souks, but they are almost as persistent and insolent about forcing their wares on you as the despised Jews. It is such an insult to call an Arab a Jew that, if he is attempting to overcharge you, it is only necessary to say that you suppose he is a Jew, and he will turn honest at once. In the old days, when the Jews were first allowed to leave their ghetto and mix with the Mohammedans, they were compelled to wear a bell hanging to their clothes to announce their approach to the faithful.

Well, Jack had just thrust the one-inch bottle of concentrated essence of lilac into his waistcoat pocket, and

we were preparing to make our elaborate adieus to the hospitable Moor, when a beautifully dressed English-woman came walking slowly up the narrow street, quite alone. It was getting late, so the souks had by that time thinned down considerably; there was no one else in the street at the moment. Without looking to the right or left, and apparently perfectly oblivious of the exquisite illuminations, she stopped in front of the perfumer's shop opposite to us and took up her position on the seat outside the counter, in full view of the street. The perfumer was a typical specimen of his proud race, a good-looking Tunisian Moor. He was dressed in faced cloth of a delicate flesh-tint which the Arabs call afternoon sun, exquisitely embroidered with silver and white braid. His slightly receding chin, rather aquiline nose, almond-shaped gleaming eyes, and thin but scarlet lips, all proclaimed him for what he was—a vain Oriental who was as careful of his complexion as a girl and as fond of dress as a French-woman. For those who admire these sedentary-lived ivory-tinted Tunisian Moors, he was certainly a fine specimen. During the evening he had brought several carnations and posies of jessamine fixed on to wooden skewers to present to his friends (male ones, of course) to wear in their ears; he was evidently very well off.

Fancy a public holiday and grand fête in England without a single woman in the show! There were, of course, plenty of Italian women (for Tunis has a large colony of Italians), but they came in, just like ourselves, as strangers and interlopers to the Mohammedan fête, and I am sorry to say that all that is dirtiest and noisiest and most disreputable in Tunis *is* Italian. Somehow our

intention to move on deserted us both at the same moment, and we instinctively sat down again. Jack's eyes were fixed upon the graceful figure seated on the gossiping-stool opposite us.

She certainly had not come to see the fête, for she kept her back persistently turned to the street. That she was a familiar figure in the souks was evident, for even the wandering eyes of the passing Jews never rested on her.

"I wonder who and what she is," I said to Jack. "There is something pathetic about her figure. I wish she would turn her face round."

"She's beautiful," Jack said, without taking his eyes off her; "I saw her as she was walking up the street."

Our host at this moment, without apparently having noticed Jack's interest in our fellow-countrywoman, leaned across the counter and, touching Mohammed on the sleeve, said: "Tell the gentleman that I have a very fine harem, and that if the lady would care to see one she may go over it at nine to-morrow."

I thanked him through Mohammed, who advised me to accept his offer (though his harem would not be a very luxurious one), as it is much more difficult to see over a harem in Tunis than in Egypt or Constantinople. Of course you know that the real meaning of the word harem is home.

"Remember," I said, "there are the tombs of the Beys to do to-morrow; they are only open to unbelievers during the three days of this fête. What do *you* think, Jack—should I go?" But Jack had no eyes or ears for

anything but the Englishwoman in the perfumer's shop across the street.

Mohammed, who was seated opposite me, leaned over and offered me another cigarette, and as he did so he said :

"That English lady is the wife of the perfumer."

"His wife!" Jack said, with as much concentrated horror in his voice as though the fine gentleman opposite had been a full-blooded Sudanese nigger; but he had to speak almost in a whisper, or the Englishwoman would have heard every word he said, the street was so narrow.

"Yes, I know very well she is his wife; he has many ladies, but she is his only wife. He makes her come and sit on that seat every morning, and on fête evenings like this when the strangers are in the souks."

"But he never talks to her," I said; "he never even bowed to her when she sat down, or altered his indolent attitude."

"That is how she sits for hours," he said. "The natives scarcely ever speak to their women, they have no intelligence—with the Arab a woman's beauty is her only intelligence. But he makes her come to the souks just to show all the Jews and other men who are jealous of his good looks that he owns an English wife."

"But why does she come?" I asked; "she was quite alone."

Mohammed smiled. "You thought so," he said, "but she was shadowed all the way by two negro eunuchs."

Jack groaned. "Good God!" he said, "how did he get her? It makes me sick to see the yellow brute sitting in silent enjoyment of her misery."

Mohammed helped himself to another cigarette. Arab

hospitality is unlimited, and although he was only our dragoman, he was for the time being Monsieur Amour's welcome guest. "That is what no one knows," he said, "but the gossip of the souks says that she met him in Palermo; he was there on business. She knew nothing about the East or the customs of Orientals except what she had read in English romances. Her family were very poor. He promised that she would be his only wife, and he has kept his word, for few Tunisians to-day care to undertake the expense of more than one wife; the women of their harems cost less and give less trouble."

"Does she like him?" Jack asked.

Mohammed lifted his eyes. "We have a saying, that joy lasts for seven days, but sadness lasts for a lifetime."

Jack got up suddenly and shook himself. "It makes me sick," he said again; "perfectly sick."

"How long has she been married to him?" I asked; "she looks very young."

"About two years. She gets thinner every day. Once she was the colour of a pink carnation; to-day she is like a pearl. It is oil and water—the West and the East cannot mix. I have lived in Paris—I know it——"

"Don't you think it is awful?" Jack said, turning to me. "But I suppose you don't; women are so funny. He was almost angry because my eyes were not aflame, like his own, with indignation."

"Do remember," I said, "that Mohammed is an Arab." When I said this he looked sorry, and when Jack looks sorry he is the old boyish Jack of three years ago.

"Oh, I beg his Arab pardon!" he said; "so he is, but he belongs to the manly, sunburnt type; he's not a pound

of butter with sensual eyes. How an Englishwoman could, I can't imagine."

Just at that moment a bare-legged nigger boy, in full white linen breeches, a white linen mess-jacket, and a gold-embroidered waistcoat, with the inevitable red fez stuck on the top of his woolly head, passed up the street carrying a flat tray full of flowers. Monsieur Amour hailed him, and, selecting a bunch of blood-red Tunis roses, presented them to me with an elaborate speech, asking me at the same time a question which I didn't understand.

"He wishes to know if you will promise to visit his harem to-morrow," Mohammed said.

I hesitated.

"Can you go with me?" I asked. The perfumer inquired what I had said.

Mohammed, apologising for my ignorance, turned my question into Arabic.

"No," Monsieur Amour said, almost gruffly. "If madame cares to come here at ten o'clock, or any other hour she likes to mention, she will find a Frenchwoman waiting to conduct her to my house."

"Why is he so anxious for me to visit his harem? I suppose it is quite safe," I said to Mohammed; "you are sure I won't be detained there?" I know that it is not so long ago since Christian women were captured for Tunisian harems. That is why the blood is so mixed. It was all grist that came to a harem mill, if the woman was pretty. Fair Caucasians, half-caste niggers, proud Genoese, even Englishwomen found their prisons there.

"He is jealous of your friend admiring his rival's

wife; he wishes to show you how beautiful the women of his harem are, and how many he can afford to keep."

"Oh, I'll go," I said, "if that's all; but you never can tell what is behind their mask-like faces—how can they manage to look so impassive? As a little child, Mohammed, were *you* whipped if you sneezed or showed eagerness about anything? did the Prophet forbid even tiny mites to look as if they cared for sugar?"

"I was not very strictly brought up," he said; "my father had travelled a great deal, but our religion teaches us repose. The Christian is always struggling about something—is soul, or his money, or his politics. Even as a child a Mussulman is a philosopher; nothing matters except what is past. The Jew and the Christian are alike in one thing—they always think of the future; the Arab thinks only of the past, it is less trouble."

"Does thinking of the past make that perfumer treat his wife as his equal?" Jack asked, with a look in his eyes as though he would like quietly to cross the street and throw the creature into the gutter.

"No one but a Mussulman can ever be a Mussulman's equal," Mohammed said with dignity. "He brings her here to show her off to the Europeans who come to see the bazaars; he buys her fine clothes and jewellery, but he is tired of her; she is very clever, but what she knows he does not understand, and what he knows, he does not think it necessary to discuss with a woman. He scarcely ever visits her now. He has a very fine harem."

Jack threw his unfinished cigarette into the street. "Shall we be going now?" he said; "I'm tired of this, aren't you?"

I agreed that we ought to be moving on, so after the most elaborate hand-shakings we took our departure. I always get Mohammed to translate their honorifics for me, for they really are as good at that sort of thing as the Japanese. The correct formula is "Marhaba" ("God be with you") from the host to the person going away, and "Marhabatêu" ("May God remain with you") from the guest to the person who is left. I was still holding the red roses which Monsieur Amour had given to me, and something prompted me, I don't know what, to lay half of them in the English girl's lap as I passed her. For one moment she looked up, and thanked me with such a mixture of dignity and sadness that tears filled my eyes. Her husband (who was still sitting with his arms akimbo on the counter, and who still wore on his good-looking face that expression of ancient wisdom which prevents any Arab ever looking quite a bounder or conceited coxcomb, which otherwise their fine clothes might make them do) gave me a graceful bow, and at once handed me a lemon-tinted Malmaison carnation which was lying on the counter along with some other "ear-flowers."

I returned his fine bow in the ineffectual British way, and we passed on. During the brief episode his wife had not once raised her eyes from the ground except for the moment when she thanked me. As we turned into the next street, and left her sitting on the outer seat of that strange little shop under a stiff curtain of memorial candles, surrounded by ancient glass bottles and gaily painted dye-boxes, in the centre of that thoroughfare of Oriental traffic, I wondered if she had passed out of my life for ever. Would that incongruous figure with those shadowed eyes

be nothing to me in the future but a pathetic memory of the Prophet's birthday fête? Her Parisian clothes, her English hair, that clearly defined line of the chin and throat which one so seldom sees in Oriental beauties, were all so out of setting in that Eastern background.

Somehow our high spirits and pleasure in having stolen a chapter from *The Arabian Nights* seemed suddenly to have deserted us, and for the rest of the evening we were nothing more than two prosaic sightseers.

Jack, who is, as you know, not much more communicative than an Arab at the best of times, became almost glum. He is the sort of Englishman who thinks it is wrong for an *Englishwoman* to marry even a Frenchman. Yet how weak all our proverbial British prejudice is compared to the conservatism and fanatical prejudice of the East. If the Englishman abroad thinks himself God Almighty, and looks as if he owned the whole creation, the Arab beats him at that game every time, for he simply knows that the biggest blackguard unchanged, so long as he is an Arab (and, of course, a Mohammedan), is better than any Christian king or saint. He lives in this era of change and of scientific discoveries, and he alone remains unchanged. The tide of progress rushes over him, but it does not wet even the tail of his white burnous. His indifference to the rest of the world, with its vulgar love of excitement and its cruel struggle for wealth, is superb. He may admire the monkey-tricks of the progressive Europeans, and take kindly to some of their inventions—electric light and electric trams, for instance, in which his indolent person dearly loves to disport itself—but he despises them all the same, just as we might admire the sleight-of-hand of a

conjuror while he was actually playing his trick, and at the same time in our hearts despise a man who earned his living by making two white rabbits come out of an empty top-hat. The Arab considers anything in the way of change and progress unnecessary and disturbing. Like the prejudiced Britisher he considers that what was good enough for his fathers is good enough for him. Lapie puts this very neatly when he says, "S'il ignore l'avenir, il connaît le passé. Il aime ce qu'il juge ancien et il juge ancien ce qu'il aime. Il a le culte du vieux. Sa morale vient de ce culte: être fidèle au passé, être fidèle à ses propres habitudes, modeler ses actions présentes sur ses actions antérieures, et tel est l'idéal de la conduite."

Although there are almost as many Jews as Arabs in Tunis, not one Arab in a thousand speaks Hebrew, and only some of the more advanced among the younger men speak French, for the strict Mohammedan is not allowed to change his language, because it is the language of the Koran. So the Jew, for the sake of filthy lucre, has had to give up the language of the Talmud and adopt French, Italian, Arabic, and English, so as to be able to carry on his commercial business in the various languages of the polyglot community of Tunis.

This will give you a pretty good idea of how sphinx-like the Arab has remained in his attitude towards the world in general, and how poor our prejudices are compared to his. Yet the same English people who consider themselves broadminded, and set down the less exuberant of their fellow-countrymen as "bigoted egoists" for carrying their look of reserve and superiority with them wherever they travel, when they go to the East, or to any

Mohammedan country, never cease to admire the fact that the Book of Genesis might have been written of the Arabs of to-day. You could throw a stone from the centre of "The Burnous of the Prophet" (the native name for Tunis), where you are actually living in Biblical times, into the heart of the French city, which is anxious to carry on her ideas of progress and modernity to the latest effort of the twentieth century. And this is what gives all tourists the greatest pleasure; yet what, may I ask, but *prejudice* and bigoted *conservatism* to the customs and teachings of their ancestors, as set down by the Prophet in the Koran, has kept Tunis what it is? If the native had been what is termed "broadminded" and progressive, could I have set sail from Marseilles, that most bourgeois of prosperous cities, and in less than twenty-four hours have set foot in a city which shows us how people lived and looked when Abraham was on the earth?

But the Prophet is so much more to the Arab in his going out and coming in, in his lying down and rising up, than Christ is to Christians, that he would not obliterate his memory or do dishonour to his name by changing the customs that were his, or by altering the ways that he knew, or by giving up the burnous that he wore. Just as a Christian sometimes likes to keep the room of some lost one unchanged, because he or she had it so, so the Arab loves to keep his world as the Prophet knew it a dozen centuries ago.

I have looked out from my high window over the "White City," and it is so late that even the Arab cats have ceased to visit their harems, and not a sound of human life comes up to me from the hidden streets which lie between the



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

A MINARET IN THE BAZAAR

[To face p. 52]

flat roofs and green domes. The tall minarets look even more Eastern and extravagant against the dark of a clear night-sky than when their arabesque whiteness is soaring up into a canopy of African blue. So good-night, dear Christian man of my heart ! " Inshallah " (" If it pleases Allah ") let me hear from you very soon.

Yours till the Great Silence,

DORIS.

CHAPTER IV

TUNIS, May 19—.

MY DEAREST,

Since I wrote last, my opinion of the Arab's taste in female beauty has not improved. And here let me mention that I use the word "Arab" indiscriminately to express the Mohammedan population of Tunis. To be brief, I have visited the harem of the opulent perfumer!

I arrived at Monsieur Amour's shop punctually at 10 A.M., and had to wait a few minutes until the Frenchwoman who was to escort me appeared.

In the shop of the *soi-disant* perfumer, just opposite, there was no sign of either the proprietor or his English wife. In the Souk-el-Attarin (souk of the perfumers) business does not commence very early. It is in the souks of the second-hand clothes and burnous-makers that you catch the early worm if you rise betimes, for there on specified days of the week they have an auction sale in the streets at nine A.M. On these auction mornings, from nine till ten, the entire bazaar-city (for the souks form a city of themselves) is an awful pandemonium. A panic in Wall Street is nothing to it; you are nearly knocked down by Jews and Berbers and poor Arabs flying along, their skinny arms hung with garments of every sort and condition of Oriental fashioning. They are all screaming at the tops of their voices, and if you didn't understand what was happening you would think that the cool colonnaded city, usually inhabited by dignified,

unhurrying Orientals, had suddenly become a howling bedlam.

When the "Frenchwoman" arrived, she turned out to be a waddling German of the second-hand wardrobe order. She spoke German-Italian, German-French, and German-Arab equally fluently. She had apparently been "raised" in Tunis, where the human hawk of this particular breed must be able to talk in four languages at least—Italian, French, and Arab for the resident population, and a little English for the Anglo-Saxon tourists who visit the bazaars.

After rather reluctantly leaving Jack and Mohammed at the shop of the perfumer, I followed the waddling creature, who seemed to have lost all sense of Western morals, through a labyrinth of narrow alleys with high whitewashed walls which connected the various souks, and in the souks themselves through endless unnamed streets, some very poor and typically Arab with high projecting windows cross-barred with green as closely as prison cells, and others noticeably Jewish where the trade was either jewellery or tailoring; and now and again along the older main thoroughfares as exquisitely beautiful as the aisles of some immense Byzantine church, with their cool vistas of stilted arches.

There may be more important bazaars in the East, bazaars where the native commerce is still quite unaffected by European influence, bazaars where the dyes and cottons are not imported from Manchester, but is there another in the world which can boast of having its highways and byways built out of the ruins of a city like Carthage? Here the streets are lined with tapering or

twisted antique columns, with capitals as richly carved and purely Byzantine as those in St Mark's in Venice. Mohammed pointed one out to me which had two holes drilled through it close enough together to let a ring or rope go through them. "In the days when the souk had its slave-market," he said, "these holes were used for tying up slaves; well-formed young women or men had their wrists tied together with a cord or chain, which was then passed through these two holes. Tunis is very much changed," he said, "even since my father's day; he remembers all that."

I tried to picture to myself a young captive slave tied up like a troublesome dog to the Carthaginian column, and the curious crowds who would be examining her good points; but I couldn't, because I have seen no pretty Arab girls, and the slave-market is now as deserted of slaves as cloisters in Italy are deserted of monks. It is a pity that these Carthaginian columns have been so often white-washed that many of them have lost their clearness of outline; the cavities in their deeply carved capitals are choked with centuries of lime; and, what is still worse, some of them are as gaily painted as barbers' poles. This Tunis, which is sometimes called "the white city of Africa," is whitewashed from top to toe, just like a Welsh cottage. Everything in it is chalk-white except the black stripes on the horseshoes of the stilted arches, the dark green tiles of the bulging domes which denote the tombs of marabouts, and the turquoise-blue of the doors of the mosques and other sacred buildings.

Each whitewashed alley that led from souk to souk had Arab houses behind its high walls, all with their backs



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

MARKET OF THE DAR-EL-BEY IN THE BAZAAR AT TUNIS

[To face p. 56

turned to the street and their eyes jealously shuttered (for windows are the eyes of a house, aren't they?). Occasionally a more pretentious house spanned the street by being built right over an archway. When that was the case it had windows on every side, but so high above the inquisitive gaze of man that you couldn't see a pair of dark eyes peering through the green shutters if you tried.

An Eastern city is so monotonously flat that all I could see over the top of the high walls of these alleys (which were not under cover) were the white minarets and the beetle-green domes of saints' tombs. The flat roofs of the houses are a great convenience, for not only do the women sit on them while they smoke and drink their coffee, but they can pass from house to house on them, and so pay calls on their friends without descending into the forbidden streets. But even on the roof of her house an Arab woman must wear her black yashmak. Many of them never leave a harem after once they have entered it, if they are of the better class. The roofs are their only promenades, and they are reserved for women only; a man might overlook his neighbour's wives if he were permitted to walk on his own house-top. It is illegal to have a window overlooking your neighbour's roof.

After walking for some time, and listening to my companion's curious views upon life generally, until we had almost reached the Kasba, the Citadel of Tunis, which was built by Charles V. on the highest spot of ground in the city, and which is now used for French barracks, we stopped at an unpretentious-looking door in a white-washed wall. It was not one of the elaborately nail-studded doors that are the admiration of all strangers, and which

have their own tragic history, which I will tell you now in case I forget. In the days of Charles V. the soldiers, and foreign invaders generally, used to raid the harems and private houses of the Arabs, until the fanatical riots between the natives and the Christians became so frequent and so serious that an order was issued that all sacred buildings such as mosques, tombs of marabouts, ecclesiastical courts and schools, and harems (which, as they represent "family life," are sacred in the Arabs' eyes) were to have their outer doors studded so closely with copper nails that it would be impossible for the hands of the unbelievers to mistake them even in the dark. These nails are in elaborate designs and signs for keeping off the evil eye. This little tale leaves plenty to the imagination, does it not? But to return to the story of this particular harem.

My feather-bed German rang the bell. After waiting for a few moments, the outer door was cautiously opened by a very slatternly-looking woman who evidently knew my guide, for they spoke intimately to each other in Arabic. She was unveiled, and dressed, I thought, very much like an Irish maid-of-all-work, except that her petticoats seemed to be seamless and to consist of one piece of material wound closely round and round her hips like a crofter's kilt. A huge apron almost covered her figure in front, and her feet and legs were bare to the knees. She beckoned to us to follow her as she clattered along in front of us, to warn the others of our coming. Her tiny Arab slippers were all fronts, and had their heels flattened down under the insteps of her feet. I know that we went through a long windowless passage which set the house back from the street (it is from this passage



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

A MOORISH DOOR, STUDED WITH NAILS, BY ORDER
OF THE EMPEROR CHARLES V.

that the master of the house calls out in a loud voice, "Clear the way!" This is a warning to the women that he is bringing a male friend into the house and that they are to betake themselves to the stop storey). Then we passed an empty porter's lodge, and at last found ourselves in a rather charming black-and-white colonnaded courtyard, with a sunken fountain in the centre of it which took my mind back to the atriums of Pompeii with their impluviums. Two very old and decrepit men were wandering about the courtyard—the eunuchs, I suppose, who guarded the house from male invaders. The rooms which led off this ground-floor courtyard were, my guide told me, inhabited by the servants only; the "ladies" slept on the floor above. A few moments after our arrival a flock of dark-haired, dark-eyed, heavy-browed women appeared, all of whom, I imagined, belonged to the servants' quarters. Their dress was too slatternly and wanting in distinction to be picturesque, but I have a faint vision in my mind of very wide white linen trousers reaching to the knees, and of ugly little blue or pink jackets, with puff sleeves, reaching only to the centre of the bust, where the disconnected portion between the trousers and the end of this absurd coatee (which is so dear to the heart of both the Arab and Jewish woman) was tightly covered with a very ugly jaeger-like woven vest. Though not very *embonpoint*, they were not to be compared in elegance or form to the straight-limbed Bedouin women who haunt the bazaars in the early mornings.

The women clustered closely round me, and a little black-eyed baby, of no particular interest beyond the fact that it was a harem-bred child, was brought forward for

me to admire. I did my best, but very soon my cup of interest in these stupid creatures was drained to the dregs, and I grew impatient to see the "real thing"—the beautiful hours of the harem; I had not come to spend my morning with the servants. I was surprised that, with his own fastidious taste in dress and his artistic choice in the matter of dye-boxes and perfume-bottles, etc., Monsieur Amour should have allowed his ladies to be waited upon by such servants—slatternly brats, with their tousled heads bound round with a pink or blue handkerchief knotted in front.

After climbing a marble staircase at one corner of the courtyard I found myself in a second courtyard similar to the one below, except that this one was roofed over with glass and had no fountain in the centre. And here again, as downstairs, all the bedrooms and passages opened off the colonnade. I could see that my waddling friend thought it all very fine and large, and expected me to be impressed.

She explained that the "ladies" (as she always called the "haremites") were not dressed yet, and that if they had expected visitors so early they would have put on their "splendid dresses."

"Are they still in bed?" I said. "It is a pity we came so early. Yet Monsieur Amour said ten o'clock."

She looked at me in a puzzled way. "Oh no, the ladies are up! You have seen them all, I think, but they have only on their ordinary clothes."

"But surely I have not seen 'the ladies'?" I said; "you told me the servants inhabited the ground floor!"

"You have not understood, madame; only the girl who

opened the door was a servant, the other maids are all in the kitchen and in back rooms working." She leaned over the balustrade and told me to look down into the courtyard. "Do you see that little slim, dark one?" (she was not slim in *my* opinion—far from it; but I said yes). "She is the youngest of them all and a great pet; she is only sixteen, and has just left home."

From a Western standpoint of beauty she was already past her best, for according to our ideas of beauty an Arab woman is at her best from twelve to fifteen.

"Poor thing," I said; "has she 'taken the veil,' or is she only a probationer?"

The "waddler" laughed. "Oh, she is fully 'professed.' I believe he is visiting her this week; but she is still very shy."

As I was studying Monsieur Amour's latest acquisition, another woman slouched into the courtyard, who promised soon to present the harem with another inhabitant. I turned away in disgust; the whole thing was to me revolting and pathetic. "Can we look at the bedrooms," I said; "it is to be hoped that they are prettier than their occupants. But first tell me—does the English wife of the perfumer in the souks, who has his shop opposite to Monsieur Amour, live in her husband's harem? is she supposed to make companions of women like these?"

"Oh, Monsieur Ajeeb? Yes, certainly, madame (Ajeeb) lives in her husband's harem. But she is his wife, and therefore she has her special apartments; she need not see any of his other ladies unless she wishes. The wife, you see, is always treated with more ceremony and dignity; she costs him so much more. But Madame Ajeeb, I believe,

lives entirely by herself; she never sees anyone except her servants and her husband, and him only when she comes to the bazaars. He is so tired of her, everyone says, that he never visits her now. She need not look so unhappy, he does not ill-treat her—he dare not, for the law protects the wives and the women of the harems, and divorce is very simple. Only the Bey can treat his women as he likes; he is his own judge.” Then she recited to me the well-known story which I have read since, of how, long ago, an Arab presented himself before the Bey, when the judicial court was sitting, and, without uttering a word in his own defence, took from underneath his white burnous a full sack, which he laid on the steps before the judicial seat, and silently and undramatically drew from it first a man’s head, and then a woman’s. He was giving himself up as a murderer. But the Bey, to whom the whole story of the world-old tragedy revealed itself in a glance, felt compelled to remember a husband’s ancient right to kill his wife and her lover when, like the adulterous woman in the Bible, she was “taken in the act.” So without as much as a word of horror or surprise, the Bey gave his sign of acquittal. If the man had been found guilty and had been condemned to death, he would have been taken out into the courtyard, which you can see from the judicial chamber, and in less than half-an-hour he would have been hanged and buried. No time is wasted on this particular business by the Arabs.

But my friend continued: “Such cases do not come before the Bey now, for to-day a deceived husband finds it more convenient to make his wife’s lover relieve him of his faithless wife and give him a large sum of money

into the bargain. But what chance have they for intrigues, poor things?" she said pityingly—"none, shut up inside these walls, except of course in Ramadhan week, when the Arabs seem to go mad, for the women are actually allowed to go out, and they may freely join in some of the festivities, always veiled, of course; but" (she gave me a knowing little nudge) "these veils are sometimes very convenient, for who is to know if your servant is taking your place at the shadow-play, or at the story-teller's, if she wears your yashmak and has the same dark eyes as her mistress, who has other fish to fry? I have seen it very neatly done."

I had not the slightest doubt of it, and I felt that she had probably aided and abetted in many a veiled tragedy, for the sake of filthy lucre.

"Of course, if Madame Ajeeb behaved like the ordinary wife of a Tunisian Arab, these women would treat her as our maids-of-honour treat our Empress. They would amuse her by playing games with her, or by showing her her grand dresses. Oh, they have a good fine time, I assure you!"

We had entered a bedroom, such a narrow strip of a room, shaped like the letter T, with a rather gorgeously curtained and counterpaned bed in the alcove end, which was formed by the bar. In an Arab house the bed is always placed in that branch of the T which commands a full view of the architecture of the colonnade and as much of the beauty of the house generally as is possible, for the æsthetic owner loves to contemplate the beautiful from his luxurious bed. These æsthetic sensualists, these masters of women, satisfy every whim which the senses demand, yet they keep

their fast of the Ramadhan to the last letter. During that great fast it is even a sin to breathe the smoke of an infidel's cigarette between the hours of sunrise and sunset. In the street a strict Mohammedan will hide his mouth and nostrils under his burnous if some stranger stops near him with a pipe or cigarette in his mouth. But the moment the fast may be broken (after the last call for prayer) the longed-for cigarette is lit and the glass of water and dates are instantly picked up by the waiting faithful with the precision of an army corps presenting arms. During the month of Ramadhan they are particularly fanatical against Christians, who drive them frantic by the sight of their food and the smoke of their pipes.

It is needless to say that the Prophet did not prohibit the actual smoking of tobacco, because tobacco was not known in his day. But he strictly forbade anything to pass through the lips or nostrils during the month of Ramadhan from sunrise until after sundown, or rather I should say from dawn until dusk. I suppose hashish and kif *did* exist in the Prophet's day, for Mohammed says they are both forbidden in the Koran. If a Mohammedan is discovered drinking wine during the month of Ramadhan he is put in prison. At any time wine must only be taken in great moderation, for excesses in eating and drinking the Prophet abhorred.

At the opposite end of the room there was a little table of mother-of-pearl. This Tunisian mother-of-pearl furniture is quite lovely; it is not the almond-toffee sort of thing which one sees in Oriental shops at home, but a mass of iridescent colours, which gleam and change with every light or shadow. It is very expensive; a small jewel-case or

little box costs as much as four pounds, and a hand-mirror about thirty shillings. The chests of it which one sees in the bazaars are made to hold the dowry which an Arab husband sends to his affianced bride. This dowry and mother-of-pearl coffer she can take back with her to her mother's house if her husband divorces her for any other reason but infidelity.

Everything in the room was quite costly, for the Arab lives simply because the Koran bids him do so; he makes up for this by decorating his fine person with rich garments, and his house with costly draperies and soft carpets. The bedroom was so narrow that it could only hold what we should consider very useless things. I discovered, for instance, no trace of a washing-stand, but it had its little Moorish table with horseshoe arches which held a finely chased silver coffee-pot and saucerless cups and an antique silver and blue-enamelled cigarette-case. A foolish-looking two-foot-wide very modern chiffonnier stood against the long wall; these few articles completed the furnishing of the apartment. Where madame kept her fine clothes, which she only wears for the coming of her master, I could not imagine. Perhaps there was a general harem hanging-cupboard which I didn't see. I followed my guide from one bedroom to another, but they were all much alike—just narrow uncomfy little rooms running broadside on with the colonnade. Nothing that I saw expressed the least trace of individuality or refinement or love of the picturesque. Some of the draperies and objects were rich, but nothing was harmonious. In the corner of this upper courtyard, just at the top of the staircase, there was a barely furnished European-looking dining-room, with covers laid

for two on the square mahogany table. This was the only dining-room I saw, but I believe each lady has her own suite of rooms, which includes a dining-room, where, like a Japanese wife, she is sometimes allowed to watch her lord and master while he eats his kous-kous—that is to say, when he is alone. If even his brother were with him such a thing would be impossible.

Monsieur le parfumeur, being a very enlightened Arab, no longer, apparently, eats as an orthodox Mussulman—with his fingers; for a little “*déjeuner à deux*” was laid on the table, which was devoid of flowers or any beautifying object. As I looked at it I thought to myself how well one of his fine old gold-embossed perfume-bottles might have been used for the date-wine, instead of the hideous modern jug which held it.

“His brother is coming to lunch with him,” my guide said; “he is expected almost immediately. The ladies dine together or alone, and still eat with their fingers.”

Hearing this first piece of news made me anxious to get away before Monsieur Amour arrived. I did not feel inclined to face the situation, or to express any admiration for his harem, or for his “ladies.” I could not admire his house, even if it did contain the family key of his ancestral castle in Spain, or his Andalusian archives. Somehow the idea of seeing that sleek and superior male in the heart of his harem made me feel sick.

The subject of sex in the East is so painfully accentuated that all which is feminine in Tunis makes me feel ashamed of being a woman.

If the women *are* as they were *made* in the beginning, in Tunis, then thank God I came a good deal later! But

to do justice to the Prophet, of whose teachings I am learning a little every day, he does not seem to have enjoined in the Koran either the veiling of women or the restrictions which prevent them ever being the companions of men instead of merely their chattels. It is man's jealousy and his Oriental overbearing authority which have done all that. Mohammed simply let well alone. It was a custom too long established to upset.

When we reached the lower courtyard again the women rushed towards us like a flock of greedy pigeons. I did not know what to say to them, for none of them could speak anything but Arabic. In thinking the situation over, I feel sure I was expected to express my admiration for all I had seen, but I didn't!

They seemed to me such a pack of ignorant, common women that it went clean out of my mind that they inhabited the upstairs rooms which we had just visited. They were utterly lacking in that refinement of feeling and completely wanting in that charm of manner which make the mousmées of Japan irresistible to the Englishmen who visit tea-houses of a certain character. It is curious that the women of Mohammedan nations (although it does not seem to be the Prophet's fault) take a lower position and are kept in a more complete state of intellectual darkness than the women of Buddhist nations. You may ask a Mussulman how his horse or father is and he will be pleased, but to ask for his wife is a terrible breach of social etiquette.

I felt embarrassed under the inquisitive and ignorant gaze of so many gleaming almond-shaped eyes, but my blouse relieved the situation. I was wearing one made of

white linen and trimmed with fine hand-made embroidery. The waddler explained that any sort of embroidery or fancy work is a passion with harem women. I realised the truth of her remark, for my blouse was pecked at by at least a dozen henna-stained hands, and the embroidery on the loose portion of the sleeves was turned inside out and examined as minutely.

They walked round me and scrutinised my back, to see exactly how it was made, and chattered about it to each other like magpies. The ingénue meanwhile was standing in the background tugging at the corner of her apron with her side teeth.

As the ladies did not seem in the least inclined to leave off their inspection, I began to try to say good-bye. The baby's little claw-like hand eagerly grasped the shilling I held out to it; the waddler explained that it was to buy sweets. I supposed it was etiquette to shake hands with the "Mesdames" Amour, but then I remembered that probably the Western custom of shaking hands was as little understood by the cloistered women of this middle-class harem as the habit of kissing was understood a few years ago by the mousmées in Japanese tea-houses. So I indulged in many bows and idiotic smiles instead.

When the door of the long passage which opened out into the street was closed behind us I gave a sigh of relief. It was good to feel once more the blue sky overhead, and to see the tall minarets, and to know that the great world outside was mine, and not that little courtyard with its prisoners' cells all round it.

Perhaps the German knew what was in my mind, for she said: "There are not nearly so many harems in Tunis

as there used to be. If you have not got an order to see the Bey's harem, or any of the harems belonging to the wealthy ministers, you did well to see this one."

I suppose I did, but it rather knocked the bottom out of my enthusiasm for things Mohammedan for the time being.

"Since slavery has been abolished, a harem costs too much for most Arabs. As a rule an Arab, unless he is very well off, has to content himself with one or two ladies. Scarcely any Tunisian is foolish enough to have more than one wife. But Monsieur Amour is well off; all these women are amply provided for."

"They seem most contented," I said.

"Of course they are," she replied, with some asperity, "they have nothing to do all day but sleep and eat and dress; they may well be."

"And wait for the coming of Amour," I said; "it sounds exciting."

"Oh, it is well to be chosen for such a harem," she said; "they visit the ladies of other harems occasionally, and every Friday they pay a visit in closed carriages to the tomb of their favourite woman-saint, Lella Manouba, and often some negro singer or Arab story-teller is allowed in to amuse them, or some dancing girls."

And this reminds me that Jack and I are going some night soon to see one of the Eastern dances one reads of so often. Unfortunately in Tunis Arab women are not allowed to dance in public, and what I have seen of Tunisian Jewesses doesn't lead me to expect either grace or beauty in the performance.

And here I must conclude all that I have to say about

Monsieur Amour's harem. My escort, I may mention, seemed contented with a tip of three francs. She told me that an Arab woman of the better class when she goes out into the street (which she never does until she is quite elderly and ugly, and even then *never* unaccompanied by her servants) not only conceals her entire person in a seamless, shapeless garment of white and hides her face under a black mask, but she throws over her head a long, broad, brocaded scarf of rich and brightly striped silk. She puts it on like a shawl round her neck and shoulders and then turns the back portion of it up until it comes right over her head, so that she can only see the actual ground in front of her feet. To be quite correct the scarf is held out at arm's length, at the point on each side where it doubles over. Attired like this (and I have seen not a few) she looks like a ship in full sail as she steers down the narrow white-walled street.

In this way her head is, as you will see if you have grasped the idea, completely hidden. When you first see a vision of this sort sailing along, you think that some simple person is playing at blind man's buff, or that the face underneath the outspread canopy must be horribly disfigured, or else rarely beautiful. Why the Arab man permits his womenkind to show their bare legs right up to their knees and at the same time insists on their faces being completely covered, I can't imagine.

And now I must tell you that Jack has spent the most of his day in the souks. His "beautiful lady" appeared about twelve o'clock. Jack, it seems, had successfully managed to conceal his look of hatred for her husband and had spent his time, while I was in the harem, talking



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

MIDDLE-CLASS ARAB WOMAN

(To face p. 70)

to Monsieur Ajeeb through the medium of Mohammed. It appears that they found a common topic of interest in rifles and armoury generally. And Jack had his reward, for he could not do less than bow and say good-morning to "Madame" when she appeared and silently took up her place on the same seat as she had occupied last night.

Jack retailed their conversation to me, which I will repeat for your benefit.

JACK: "I have been discussing with your husband the beautiful workmanship and the antiquated shapes of Tunisian native firearms. They are mere curios—nothing more—very charming for museums, and as modern, I suppose, as the French wish them to be."

When he said the word "husband," Madame Ajeeb blushed almost painfully; even her hands seemed to convulse at the word, but Jack was determined to make her talk.

JACK: "Do you speak Arabic?"

SHE: "Yes, but very badly."

JACK: "I suppose your husband speaks French?"

SHE: "Yes, quite well—Tunisian French."

JACK: "I can't speak even English French, so that won't help; I'm a regular Britisher. I've travelled all over the world on the strength of his Majesty's most slangy English; will you please tell Monsieur Ajeeb how sorry I am that I can't speak to him in French—that I'm a regular duffer."

SHE: "I'm afraid I don't know how to convey the exact meaning of 'duffer' in French" (the nearest approach to a smile crept into her eyes). "Besides, you are my countryman; it is not wise to say it."

She answered her husband in the most formal tones when he said something to her which made the colour fly to her face again.

SHE: "You must understand that to the ordinary Arab or Moor, speaking many languages only means commercial enterprise—which he despises."

JACK: "I rather agree with him—Jews and waiters and Germans, and all those sort of people, can always speak half-a-dozen languages at least. I somehow feel rather shy of a fellow, unless he is in 'the diplomatic,' who can speak lots of languages; he is generally either a terrific bounder or an adventurer."

SHE: "The Arab is quite like an Englishman in that respect; he remains perfectly contented with his own language; he considers it is undignified to change it."

JACK: "Is it a pretty language—do you like it?"

SHE (with hesitation): "Like it? . . . oh, it is just as though English people still spoke in Biblical phraseology to-day, . . . it is dignified and impressive."

Here her husband, who had been watching her with that calm, unmoved, Eastern equanimity of countenance, interrupted her, and almost appealingly she said to Jack, "He . . . my husband asks you to go and have a cup of coffee with him in a very popular café near here." The invitation was evidently meant to stop a conversation which he could not understand.

At that juncture I put in my appearance, and Jack repeated the perfumer's invitation.

I pretended that Jack was my husband; it makes the situation safer and simpler in the souks.

"I will allow my husband to go," I said, "if you will

allow your wife to make one of the party; then I can go too."

Monsieur Ajeeb looked at me in blank amazement, and I saw Mohammed's grave eyes give their little twinkle. "Fancy a wife *allowing* her husband," I knew they were both saying to themselves; but the Arab is a gentleman, whatever his faults may be, and Monsieur Ajeeb recognised that, according to the etiquette of our immodest nation, I was quite within my province.

So to Mohammed's amazement, and evidently somewhat to the consternation of his wife, he said:

"Oui, madame, avec grand plaisir."

And now, dear, the rest of my morning's adventures must go into my next letter.

To-morrow I should get a letter from you, and Achmet will present it to me with his most Allahish smile, quite pleased that the strange English lady who so conveniently met her good-looking male cousin just after her husband had gone home to England alone, has at last got the letter she has so often inquired about. Our little intrigue interests this child of Nature, and when Jack brings me flowers he is as pleased as

Your loving
DORIS.

CHAPTER V

TUNIS, *May 19—*.

MY DEAR MAN,

Achmet brought your letter to my bedroom at six-thirty A.M. this morning, and presented it to me with as much ceremony as though it had been the sacred Koran itself, and I was so glad to get it that I felt inclined to go out and hug the poor doubled-up old Sicilian woman of about seventy who "swills" out the whole of this white-marble-staired and white-marble-floored hotel with buckets and buckets of cold water every morning between sunrise and the rising of the guests. She mops it all up *standing*, with her back bent double—the attitude is most extraordinary, I assure you; her head almost touches the floor, and—well, you can picture the result!

To-day I am less devastated by the Orient's inexplicable fascination, and far surer of my love of home. And this, dear, because of your letter, which carried in it a breath of England's freshness. I felt it just as surely as though I was tramping by your side through the wet woods.

In Tunis, spring is summer with its blazing pageant of colour, and summer is an arid desert.

Already, although it is only May, the country round Tunis shows not one green blade of grass or the meanest refuge of shade. Only here and there a bright spike of blue sugalmei, which has braved the drought and pitiless sun, stands up and salutes you like a memory of Sicily out of the dunes of yellow sand. After all, dear, how



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

PLOUGHMAN

[To face p. 74]

un-southern Sicily is compared to Tunis, and yet they are actually connected by a reef of rocks under the sea. When I take my afternoon tram drive into the country (and here let me mention that the trams in Tunis are, as Jack says, simply "ripping") my heart beats like the pendulum of a cheap clock each time I see ancient and yellow Africa spreading itself out before me. It is ugly and barren and burnt and treeless, for no one could call a date-palm a tree (it is a lamp-post with a tuft of ostrich feathers on the top of it, which hoists itself up into the blue as a signal of Africa), and yet the country has its unnameable charm. Sometimes that vast flatness of sand, so like the sea in its psychology, seems to me to be anciently wicked and cruelly unrelenting, and at other times it soothes me with its silent understanding. I think somehow one couldn't help growing bigger and becoming less burdened with the ego of self if one always slept in the desert under the stars, one's head pillowed on the bosom of truth, one's ear close to the heart-beat of immortality.

Basta! I must take up my log where I left off.

Well, dear, rather strange and somewhat amusing things have happened; and our interest in the beautiful Lady of the Souk-el-Attarin grows apace. Jack is quite *épris*; but she, poor soul, imagining that he is my husband, feels a little embarrassed. I told Mohammed not to explain to the natives in the bazaars that Jack is not my husband, for in the East no woman can have a man for a friend. He is husband, brother, parent, or nothing; if he isn't what he ought not to be. I left off in my last letter just as we were starting off with the perfumer and his wife to have coffee in a native café. In the souks you can, I

must tell you, drink coffee all day long and never pay a penny for it. It is the custom with all the merchants to serve you with coffee, even if you are only looking at the contents of their shops and have no real intention of buying anything; as this politeness costs only a half-penny each time it is not a very ruinous speculation on the giver's part.

Our way led through the shoemakers' souk, which is one of the largest and busiest in the city; for the bazaar is a city to itself, with its mosques, prisons, baths, schools, courts, and manufactures. The city of no night, one might call it, for it is inhabited only in the daytime. As I passed along the endless street of busy shoemakers, hammering and stitching away in their little dens at bright green slippers, and lemon-yellow slippers, and pale blue slippers, all fantastically tasselled and embroidered in cerise and turquoise silk, I said to myself that every inhabitant of Tunis, of whatever nationality—Italian, French, Arab, or Jewish—must wear out at least three dozen pairs of these coquettish slippers every year; for the workers are never idle, and their dens are literally stacked and curtained with slippers and shoes of every absurd hue, though all of the same Oriental shape. What a mass of colour—the greenness of the greens, the yellowness of the yellows, the vividness of the blues! You say to yourself, can ordinary workaday slippers do all this? What children for fine feathers these Tunisians are, with their fancy jebbas and giddy slippers. Only the historical burnous in Tunis is always white.

I watched a young man as richly arrayed as Solomon in all his glory (and I understand now how glorious

that glory must have been) seated on the outside edge of one of these little shoemakers' dens, choosing a pair of slippers made of blue kid, as bright as a turquoise, for one of his "ladies." His attitude betrayed that the situation demanded as much gravity and attention as the studying of the Koran. His well-fed legs were encased in the whitest of white silk stockings and his feet were exquisitely fitted in lemon-yellow shoes. The edges of his white cashmere burnous were embroidered in dove-grey to suit the grey cloth of his clothes.

As we turned out of the slipper souk into a narrow unroofed, whitewashed street, we passed one of the Arab fortune-tellers, who read your future by tracing queer geometrical signs in sand and studying them afterwards. I didn't know that the huddled-up bundle of dirty white lying beside a pile of ancient books was a human being, so I picked up one of the books to see if it was characteristically Mohammedan (I want very much to buy a copy of the Koran from an Arab), but just as I lifted it from the ground a skinny brown arm was thrust out of the bundle of white, and long fingers angrily seized the book. I asked Mohammed to explain. Were the old books not for sale? I had seen other poor Arabs sleeping beside their humble stock-in-trade—generally rusty nails and battered pieces of iron—waiting for Allah to send along some poor fool to buy their rubbish.

"He is from the desert," Mohammed said; "he will tell you your future if you will pay him three sous."

I turned to Madame Ajeeb—"Will you let him?" I said; "it will be great fun."

She looked nervously at her husband. "I think I

would rather not. . . . The present is . . .” I was sure she was going to say “bad enough,” but she stopped ; so I added, “sufficient for the day thereof.” As I spoke I threw down my three sous on a sack by the Arab’s side. He solemnly raised his eyes and looked for a moment first at me and then at Madame Ajeeb ; Mohammed, Jack, and Monsieur Ajeeb were all standing a little way off. He then took a handful of sand from a basket at his side and told me to hold it very closely in my hand. When I had held it for some time he spread it flat on the pavement in front of him and made some passes over it, and then carefully smoothed the surface of it again. His movements were so irritatingly slow that I felt I should know the whole of my own future before he told me anything, but after straightening up his back and throwing off his white rags he commenced covering the sand with geometrical designs, which he traced with his long, brown, white-nailed forefinger. Evidently he saw nothing, for the surface was smoothed once more, and he said something rather irritably to the crowd of Arabs who collected round us ; then once more the solemn ceremony was repeated, but with no better success. He was undoubtedly put out about something. Suddenly looking up, he beckoned to Mohammed to come and interpret for him.

“He wishes me to tell you that nothing is revealed. Something troubles him—it is the other lady ; her future comes before him ; she must go away.”

But Jack, who had followed Mohammed, said, “Oh no ! let him tell Madame Ajeeb what he sees—you *will* let him, won’t you ? ”

She shook her head, and began elbowing her way out of the throng of boys and loafing Berbers who surrounded us, but Jack held on to her arm.

"Please stay," he pleaded; "your husband is talking to a friend; he can't object."

For a moment she hesitated, but Jack threw three sous on the sand. "Well, if you wish it," she said. "But what does it matter what the man sees? it can't change what Fate has ordained."

"Fate be hanged!" Jack said; "I'm not a Moham-medan."

The desert man, after telling her to hold the soil as I had done, pressed close in the palm of her hand, began tracing patterns on the sand once more; but this time he was absorbed and alert, his whole attitude was different.

Presently he folded his hands in front of him, and with a mystic expression in his eyes began studying the patterns in the sand. Occasionally he looked up at Madame Ajeeb. What a strange object he was! His thin bronzed face, with its exquisitely delicate nose, fine eyebrows, gleaming teeth and eyes, was almost effeminate in its beauty. His turban was made of a thick rope wound round and round a piece of white head-cloth which acted as a fez and came out below the rope at each side of his face, where it served as a scarf for his bare neck and chest. These rope turbans are worn only by people from the interior—he was certainly a typical desert mystic. At last he signed to Mohammed; I could see that by this time Madame Ajeeb was very nervous.

"Only the woman and Allah know what fresh trouble

has come to her heart," he said. "For worldly riches she forsook her country and her people; she must bear the punishment which Allah sends."

We all felt too uncomfortable to make any comment, and poor Mohammed was obviously unwilling that the scene should proceed; but Madame Ajeeb said, "Go on—please go on."

"Everything is black; she has forsaken the light. But Allah is great; He is the light of the world."

"That's enough, I don't want to hear any more; I am going now," Madame Ajeeb said hurriedly; but the mystic's eyes held her while he smoothed out the sand again, and again made triangles and cabbalistic designs on it. However, just as he was about to speak, Monsieur Ajeeb came up to the outside of the crowd and asked what the Arab had said.

"Nothing very much, so far," I said; "but he is beginning again; perhaps this time he will come nearer the truth."

Mohammed, who had to kneel quite close to the seer to hear what he said, took care to translate his words into English, since Monsieur Ajeeb was present:

"If help comes to you, take it, for it is sent from God. The West and the East can never mingle. The daughters of unbelievers should not marry the sons of Allah."

I was close to Mohammed. "Of course he knows Madame Ajeeb," I said; "he has often seen her in the souks?"

"No," Mohammed said, "he only arrived in Tunis this morning. He speaks a strange dialect; I can scarcely understand him. He asked me if it was possible that this

unbeliever had married a Mussulman; it would be wiser, perhaps, to go away."

Madame Ajeeb was standing with her wonderful eyes fixed on the Arab, who was studying the sand again as intently as though it was as deep and full of mystery as the sea. "He is speaking to you again, Monsieur Mohammed," she said. "He evidently wishes you to explain his difficulty; please give him your ear."

"He wishes to apologise for his slowness, but it is not easy to get in touch with the minds of unbelievers; he sees things for a moment, but they fade away so quickly that he loses their meaning. He has just said that your husband is now a stranger to you; where he once loved, he now hates—the East and West cannot mingle, nor can oil and water mix. A man of your own faith will take you across the sea; you are to trust him."

"Oh, come, please let us leave him!" Madame Ajeeb said; "these desert people are terrible; they have occult powers—indeed they have!" Her husband, who had at last begun to show signs of impatience, called out to Mohammed:

"What lies has he told her now?"

"What fortune-tellers tell every woman—that they are to have three sons, and a beautiful and wealthy husband."

The Moor smiled. "Am I to be their father?" he asked.

Mohammed didn't answer, so with the slow dignity of his race, Monsieur Ajeeb pushed aside the noisy crowd and addressed the Arab himself.

A look of dawning understanding lit up the face of the fortune-teller, and Monsieur Ajeeb took care to repeat

By the Waters of Carthage

for our benefit in French the question he had asked the Arab.

"Shall I be the father of my wife's three sons?" As he spoke his face was as coldly cynical as a camel's.

The Arab looked at him and jerked back his head. "The father of her children will be an unbeliever," he said, "but for her sins she will have no sons; while there is whiteness in her heart tell her to return to her people."

This was enough; we all turned to go simultaneously, the situation was becoming difficult. "Go," the Arab said, pointing his long finger at Madame Ajeeb, "go; in the Koran the Prophet tells us that there is the same God for Christians and for Mussulmans. God is good; knock at the door of His generosity while there is still whiteness in your heart; for hate turneth white into black—hate poisons the soul."

As we were passing out of sight he beckoned to Monsieur Ajeeb to return. We waited for him to rejoin us. When he did so, he told Mohammed that the Arab had warned him that "it was money that had tempted his wife to forsake her people, and that it was money that would make him restore her to them again."

Mohammed told me this afterwards.

Like all natives Monsieur Ajeeb is superstitious, so I asked if he seemed disturbed.

"He was careful not to show what he felt," Mohammed said; "but if you and your friend wish to see anything more of Madame Ajeeb, I would advise you not to let her join you in the café now. Your friend can speak only English; they will naturally talk together."

Poor Mohammed! He spoke so cautiously—just as

though he were afraid I should be jealous of Jack's very evident admiration for Madame Ajeeb.

"Her husband does not wish her to go to the café," he said. "Besides, she might feel uncomfortable; she can understand Arabic—the Arabs will not know that; they sometimes speak very plainly"—he hesitated—"about Christians." Mohammed was undoubtedly ill at ease.

"I quite understand, Mohammed; we have a saying that where ignorance is bliss 'twere folly to be wise. I should be in bliss; madame would be . . ."

The birth of a smile broke the set gravity of Mohammed's face for a moment.

"Tell me, Mohammed, do you think she is beautiful; do the Arabs admire her?" I had no idea that I was asking the dear piece of blue-and-brown dignity an embarrassing question, but to my surprise his very neck and ears became a flame of crimson.

"Her eyes," he said, "they are like a lake in the desert—a lake from which every man would drink."

"To look at them almost makes me cry," I said; "poor exiled souls!"

"To look at them makes slaves of free men," he said quietly.

"Do *you* often look at them, Mohammed?"

I spoke jestingly, but I saw that my mirth was ill chosen.

"I have an offer to go to Kairowan this autumn with a French count, who is so rich that any sum I ask he will pay me if I will only go, but—" he paused, "madame is here, so I stay."

I put my hand on his fine blue cloak—"Forgive me, Mohammed," I said, "I was both stupid and rude."

He made one of his beautiful bows. "Madame, how could you read my heart? I am only a paid servant, and in Christian eyes an Oriental. I know what that means—I have lived in Paris." He turned up his eyes—"Madame Ajeeb is a saint."

"You are a strange, incomprehensible people," I said. "You think Madame Ajeeb, with her almost too slender figure, beautiful; so do I, and so, apparently, did her husband when he desired to marry her; yet *look* at the Arab women I saw in that harem; I thought them *almost* hideous. Do *you* admire these 'mountains of flesh,' are they lovely moons, Mohammed?"

"Ah, madame, how can I explain?—it is all so difficult. The Arab men admire women from so many standpoints. An Arab never sees his *wife* or knows her until he is married, unless she is his cousin—which is as often the case as can be, for we have a saying, 'Why marry a stranger when your cousin awaits you.' An Arab boy is allowed to see his girl cousins, unveiled, and to play with them until they are twelve or thirteen years of age, and as Arab girls are marriageable at fourteen they are often in love with each other as children. And cousins on the paternal side are allowed to marry, for although the Prophet advised his people not to marry their first cousins, the custom has become very general."

"I should imagine it is the only safeguard against marrying a pig in a poke," I said; "a girl cannot entirely alter during the two years that she is veiled from her cousin's eyes."

"That is it," he said. "Besides, the blood-tie is supposed to make her love her husband all the more

devotedly and to make her more faithful to his family as well as to himself."

"What an awful moment it must be when you see your wife's face for the first time."

"If his fiancée is not beautiful, an Arab husband demands that at least she shall be domestic-looking," he said; "that is why she is fattened. But an Arab does not hope for beauty in his wife, for beauty, after all, is like love—you cannot hide it even under a veil; if a girl is lovely, the world knows it. I think a man could tell that a woman was beautiful if she were tied up inside a sack—what do you think, madame?"

"But Arabs are so easily pleased," I said. "If a woman has fine eyes and . . ."

But here he interrupted me: "Would you like to know the true analysis of an Arab woman's beauty?" he said.

"Yes," I said, "please tell me."

"I could not tell it to you, madame," he said; "but to show you how particular an Arab is, I will write it out for you in French and send it to you this evening." And this, dear, is what he sent.

"*Four* things in a woman should be *black*: the hair of the head, the eyebrows, the eyelashes, and the dark part of the eyes; *four white*: the complexion of the skin, the white of the eyes, the teeth, and the legs; *four red*: the tongue, the lips, the middle of the cheeks, and the gums; *four round*: the head, the neck, the fore arms, and the ankles; *four long*: the back, the fingers, the arms, and the legs; *four wide*: the forehead, the eyes, the bosom, and the hips; *four fine*: the eyebrows, the nose, the lips, and the fingers; *four thick*: the lower part of the back,

the thighs, the calves of the legs, and the knees; *four small*: the ears, the breasts, the hands, and the feet."

After having read through the above, I agreed with Mohammed that Arabs are not so easily pleased as I imagined. But how many of them have learned, I wonder, that there is no use crying for the moon?—though every beautiful woman is a full moon to an Arab; "My moon-faced beloved!" is the ordinary term of endearment.

Before we had reached the café the Moor was waiting there with his wife; they had taken some secret passage through a shop or courtyard and arrived before us. As I came up, he said:

"I must apologise for my wife, she must return home; you will, I trust, excuse her."

"Oh, of course," I said, "if she *must* go home; but it would be more agreeable for me to have the company of another lady in the café."

"You must not be afraid, madame," he said, "they see many voyageurs in this café, and you do not understand Arabic; but for my wife it would be——!"

Before saying good-bye to Madame Ajeeb I said to her: "I should so much enjoy meeting you again; may I call for you at your husband's shop; perhaps we could do some sightseeing together?"

"If you come alone next time," she said hurriedly. "I mean, come without your husband; but even then I am afraid I shan't be allowed to see you again; they never trust their women."

"Oh yes, you will," I said. "I fancy your husband likes me; I will flatter him—all men are won by flattery——"

"Good-bye," she said, "and thank you. I must go now." With Jack she didn't shake hands; she only bowed with extreme formality.

"I will return here," the Moor said, "when I have taken my wife home."

I saw the lines on Mohammed's face stiffen as we watched them walk up the street together under the beautiful Byzantine arches, and on through the flickering light and shade, the Moor haughtily enveloped in his white burnous, his step as free and light as a stag on the heather, and madame at his side, Parisian and slender, in her modish muslins and laces.

The three of us, Jack, Mohammed and I, all quickly turned our backs on their retreating figures. "Oil and water cannot mix," I said to Jack, repeating the words of the wise man. And then there was silence between us. Somehow I can't help feeling, dear, that the fate of that woman, whose eyes are like "a lake in the desert," is going to be mixed up with the future of these two men, Jack and Mohammed.

My insight into a harem and that strange little episode seemed enough for one morning, but a still stranger thing happened which will make you laugh, although really it shouldn't. . . . But how am I to tell you everything when the days hold so much, and when everything, to me at least, seems worth telling? What shall I leave out, and what shall I give you? I hope I shouldn't omit the little human things which appeal to me so strongly, and yet I feel that I ought by this time to have given you a straightforward description of the Kasba and the Bardo, and the sights of Tunis generally, which I beg to state I have not

By the Waters of Carthage

yet seen. But it is "Carthage," I know, that is making you say to yourself over and over again, "Carthage is not half-an-hour's journey by train from Tunis, and Doris has not been there yet." But I really can't help it, dear. It is the souks, they are to blame, and the endless joy it gives me to watch the game of life being played by people in them—people who have let Time blow over them like the dry sand in the desert, which blows over one like a great sea fog and passes on into the infinite. It blows on and on and leaves one dry and clean in the great unchanging flatness.

* * * * *

As we were entering the café a Bedouin woman who was seated on one of the little stone seats outside accosted us. She was such a pretty, smiling, upright young creature, who answered very well to the analysis of Arab female beauty which I have just given you. I couldn't help stopping to give her a sou. She had a dear warm-skinned black-eyed baby at her breast, whose only garment was a tiny dark-blue cotton shirt. The woman, of course, being Bedouin, was unveiled, and, like her baby, not too abundantly clothed. What a delicious picture they made, that child-mother and sucking infant, a piece of nature the desert sun had smiled on and loved.

Mabrucka, for that was the mother's name, had a smile which, if you were mortal, you could not resist, for it gleamed and pleaded and loved, right into the very heart of you. Two big white-metal fibula brooches (true descendants of their Etruscan ancestors) did magnificent work in holding together her one seamless garment. They were fastened just on the citadels of her pomegranate breasts.

This brown garment, without cut or fashion, was so ingeniously draped about her young person that she looked like a statue of an Amazon mother, and although her arms and ankles and chest were bare, modesty was not lost sight of. When I say bare I am not quite accurate, for they were almost covered with necklaces and bracelets, which were closely fringed with charms and amulets of the oddest description. Mabrucka is a little woman, but she walked in such a way that she was just the right height for womanly dignity, and although she seemed *very* slender and as straight as a young willow-shoot, her chest-measurement must be quite broad, for the fringe of silver chains, which only reached from one brooch to another across her bosom, goes right to my very armpits, and I am, dear, as you know, not too slender.

I greatly wanted to buy her barbaric baubles, and yet I hated the idea of offering her money for them. But again I need not have minded, for it was pathetic to see the eager young thing literally tearing them off her throat and chest and ankles. Her beautifully childish teeth bit the coarse horsehair apart which tied them on. One after another she thrust the things into my hands—first the neck-collar of exquisitely wrought slabs of solid silver joined together with strands of long coral and yellow glass beads and silver chains, dangling with little metal charms, then her broad silver bracelets, covered with ancient designs to keep off the evil eye, and last of all, with furious haste, her breast ornaments and heavy anklets. One anklet she could not get off (she had worn it since she was a little child), so like an antelope she darted across the road to a metal-worker, where, thrusting out her foot, she insisted on him stretching

the wide silver band open so as to let her ankle slip through. Such eager impetuosity I never saw. To me it was pathetic to see this sun-kissed child of the desert trembling with eagerness to change her ancient heirlooms, those highly treasured guardians against evil and procurers of happiness, for a handful of French silver. But the avaricious part of me prevailed, and there I stood in that Arab café with my hands full of poor Mabrucka's family jewels. What was I to do with them? How foolish I should look if I wore any one of them, and how perfectly they had suited that little piece of Bedouin motherhood. I felt a vulgar vandal as I watched her stride off, smiling like the spring, with her little brown hands full of bright new francs and her pretty neck and arms and chest quite bare.

Ah, smiling Mabrucka! what evils would befall you, I wondered, without your cowrie shells bound with silver, and your piece of black stone, and your leather-like heart of compressed herbs, your ugly tin hands of Fatima, and your fish and bean and little axe? How *dared* you part with them all? But, fortunately for you, you could not wrench off with those strong white teeth or slender fingers that blue tattooed cross which your mother put between your eyebrows when you were a little child, and which *I* know, though you do not, owes its origin to Carthaginian days when Christians who wore a cross between their straight eyebrows were exempt from certain taxes and given certain privileges. You could not offer that indelible charm to me for another bright franc! Perhaps, I said to myself, the cross alone will be sufficient to see her safely home to her tent in the grey sand beside her grey camels and to the embraces or abuses of her fine chief and master.



Photo Garrigus, Tunis

BEDOUIN JEWELLERY

[To face p. 90

Ah, Mabrucka, will he rob you of the vulgar mess of pottage for which you have sold your birthright?—only Allah knows.

* * * * *

The café itself was nothing more or less than a huge platform with a roof and walls, raised off the ground and entered by a little narrow passage at the top of a short flight of steps. Some pillars ancient and modern rose from floor to ceiling, and a passage ran down and across the building, dividing it into four. These four platforms were carpeted with rugs and literally covered with sleeping or smoking Arabs; and when an Arab sleeps, be it in his shop, or in his Turkish bath, or in his café, he rolls his soft person up in his white burnous and lays himself down and sleeps like a contented pig. I had scarcely time to take in the Oriental effect of the scene, the young men with gleaming eyes and fanciful clothes playing dominoes or smoking kif, the bearded and grey reading their Koran, the fat and middle-aged fast asleep, when someone caught hold of my arm and a voice full of tears said :

“Oh, mon Dieu, but I am glad you have come . . . you will help me, I am distracted ! ” The pretty dimpled face of la petite Belge was pale with anxiety, and at the sight of me her laughing eyes filled with tears.

“Whatever *is* the matter ? ” I asked. “Are you alone? have you lost your husband ? ”

“No, no, I have not lost him, and there is much to be alarmed about ; he has smoked too much of that horrible kif or hashish. His brain is mad ; he imagines that he is John the Baptist ! Oh, it is dreadful ! Do you hear him ? ”

I burst out laughing, I couldn't help it, the vision my

mind pictured of the Angry Saxon garbed like John the Baptist was too much for my sense of humour. "Where on earth is he?" I asked, "and what is hashish?"

"It is a wicked, wicked thing to take—it is worse than opium! Jean did not believe what the Arab told him. It produces strange hallucinations—ah! there he comes," she added, "what *shall* we do? He has been out in the little garden at the back, where they burn the coffee, telling all those infidels that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand . . . it is so unlike poor Jean, for even if he thought so, it would not make him get off his chair when he is not foolish with that horrible stuff."

Down the centre aisle of the café he came, as stark staring a lunatic as ever you saw out of Bedlam; and really I don't expect you to believe it, but he had contrived to assume some likeness to the stereotyped pictures of John the Baptist. It was horrid of me, I know, but I simply sat down on the edge of the platform and almost had hysterics with laughing. He was reeling off yards of the New Testament in the most prophetic voice you can imagine.

The Arabs, who did not, of course, understand what he was saying, did not trouble to stir themselves; they had seen too many hashish maniacs to find this loud-voiced Englishman amusing. But to us it was startling and alarming. I thought of the man who imagined he was a poached egg and spent all his time looking for a piece of toast to sit down on.

Why didn't this huge Anglo-Saxon think *he* was that poached egg divorced from its toast, I wondered; it would have kept him quiet and busy. Of course he might

have imagined he was something even more disturbing than the Evangelist, and with this I tried to comfort his wife while he shouted out to the indifferent Arabs, "*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.*"

"Just think," I said to his wife, "if he had imagined that he was St Louis, or even an earlier crusader, he would be going about chopping off the heads of these complacent infidels instead of merely preaching to them!"

Trembling with fear she touched her husband on his arm, but evidently he thought she was the Pharisee who asked John the Baptist why he baptized, if he was neither Christ nor Elias nor that prophet, for he answered her, with a splendid dignity and gentleness which he does not possess in his non-hashish moments:

"*'I baptize with water: but there standeth One among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.'*"

All this sounds most blasphemous to you, of course, especially when I tell you that Jack was positively convulsed with laughter the whole time, and even Mohammed had forgotten his dignity; but the little Belgian was so unhappy and distressed that Jack tried his best to induce the lunatic to be quiet, but he shook him off.

"I tell you 'the *law* was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'"

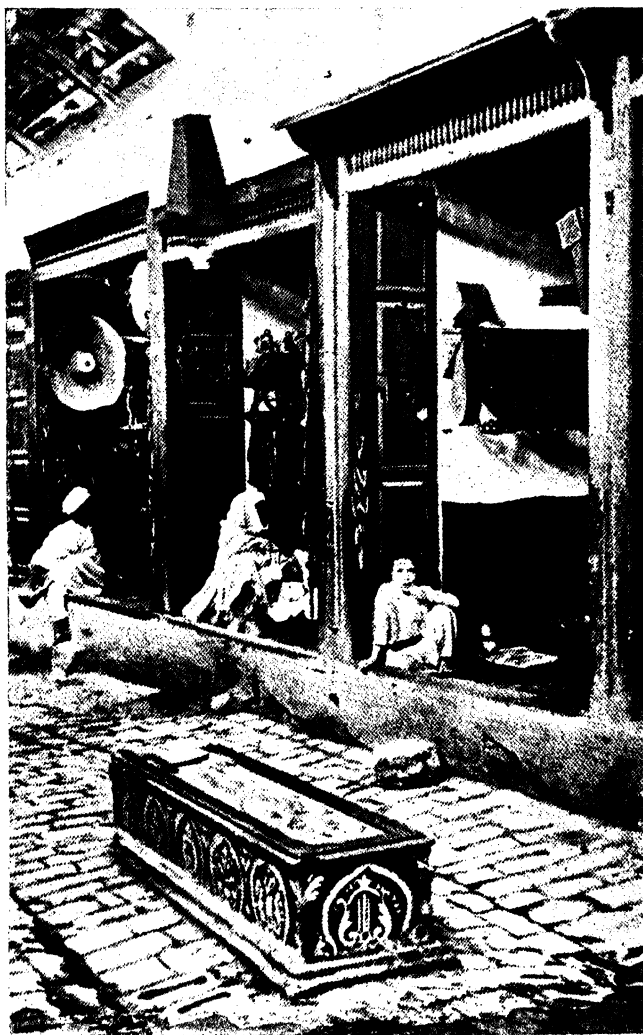
"Jean, Jean," his wife said entreatingly, "you are making a fool of yourself, and you know that is what you never will do; you will be so angry afterwards—do come home, you are not well."

But the only answer she got was, "'Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.'"

As he shouted out these last words he jumped up on to a sort of gaily painted wooden chest, and was just going to begin again when every Arab in the place seemed suddenly to awake and become dangerously alert; the next second, with one unanimous bound and a scream of fanatical rage, they had rushed to the green-and-gilt chest, and, if it had not been for Jack, the Angry Saxon, I feel sure, would have been torn limb from limb.

Mohammed screamed to Jack: "Hold on to him; we must take him by his head and feet and drag him out. That is the tomb of a marabout (saint); he has defiled it and insulted our religion."

"My God!" Jack said, and with another leap at the towering figure of the Angry Saxon he had caught hold of him by the legs and brought him tumbling to the ground in the middle of the gesticulating and threatening Mohammedans. The next second Mohammed had him securely by the heels, and Jack by the shoulders, and in this undignified manner "John the Baptist" was carried out of the building. The last words I heard him exclaim were, "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life . . . and he that believeth not in me shall not see life. I go to baptize in the river Jordan," and then Jack's coaxing voice, answering him: "That's right, old chap, get on



THE MARABOUT'S TOMB IN THE SOUK OF THE SADDLERS

with your baptizing, there are thousands of people waiting for you ; I'll show you the way to the river—it's quite close to Carthage."

It was surprising how quickly the hubbub in the café subsided, for the Arabs, seeing that both Jack and Mohammed were doing all in their power to control the Englishman's behaviour, really took the whole thing very well. In less than seven minutes they had all returned to their pipes or sleep or silent contemplation. The saint who lies buried in this popular café asked his friends to bury him in a café, so that he would never be forgotten.

I turned to the petite Belge and said : " I think we had better wait outside until Mohammed and Jack return. But please tell me, how did it all come about? Your husband is the last person in the world I could ever have imagined doing such a thing."

" Poor Jean," she said, " he will die of shame ; for the one answer he always gives me when I tell him to ask the way, or to ask for some explanation of things we do not understand, is, ' You can do it if you like, I won't make a fool of myself.' We came to the café. He wished to try the effect of hashish, for I had told him what an Arab had told me in French—that it was very dangerous for those who had never taken it to do so. But you know he is like all your countrymen—so very, very positive ; he said he was certain it would not affect him, and that he meant to try it. Strangely enough, hashish seemed to interest him more than anything else, so he tried it. I do not know how much he took, I was not interested, for I did not think that even a fire-engine could rouse Jean. I was watching a very young bridegroom, who was over in a quiet corner

hiding from his friends. It is a strange custom here that for a fortnight after his marriage the bridegroom leaves his own part of the town and hides himself in a strange café, or in a barber's shop, from all his friends; is it not modest and strange?"

I laughed. "He is perhaps ashamed of the pig he has got in his poke."

"I don't know," she said, "but he quite interested me; he was smoking kif, which is very expensive. I was thinking how ignorant your Shakespeare was to imagine a Moor was black—the young bridegroom was the colour of an egg—when quite suddenly Jean said:

"‘I will have a finer cathedral raised in my name than that white monstrosity they have built to St Louis at Carthage.’"

"‘Will you?’ I said laughingly; ‘please tell me, what will you do to deserve it?’ I am a Catholic, you know, and I love that beautiful white cathedral at Carthage, and I also love the beautiful St Louis.

"‘I am John the Baptist,’ he said, rising to his feet, ‘and St Louis was only a French lunatic who gave up his crown to fight in the Crusades, when any ordinary soldier would have done just as well.’ And then he became quite wild, and to me it was news that Jean knew his Bible at all, for I have never seen him read it, and he never goes to church—he says he is bored enough already."

She was telling me all this when Monsieur Ajeeb appeared—he had evidently met Mohammed and Jack with their inspired companion, for he seemed to understand the situation.

I introduced him to la Belge, whom I saw he greatly

admired. "I once knew an Arab," he said, "who was greatly addicted to hashish. When he was under the influence of it he always imagined that he was being chased all over the town; he used to run and run until he dropped down exhausted with fatigue. But as a rule it produces total unconsciousness, and then it is impossible to rouse the subject until the effects have worn off." He explained that the Arabs smoke these narcotics because the Prophet forbade the drinking of strong wines. Hashish is made from hemp. It is like a small grain, which you sprinkle on the surface of tobacco.

"Oh, but I have seen lots of Arabs drinking wine," I said, "in the French cafés in the boulevards at night."

"Not wines, I think, madame, but liqueurs; Mohammed did not know of liqueurs, he could not forbid them; besides, one takes so very little liqueur he could not have objected."

I laughed.

"The modern Arab finds loopholes if he can," he said; "European fashions are dangerously near. Will you have some coffee?" he asked; "the boy brings it now."

We seated ourselves just inside the café, and almost immediately a boy with white clothes and a very black face, and lips as thick as black puddings, served us with Arab coffee out of a long-handled brass pot which he carried straight from the fire. The coffee was very thick, very strong, and very sweet, not at all to my liking; but oh, how often I have had to drink it, for politeness' sake!

As Jack and Mohammed didn't return, we couldn't stay very long, and really there was not much more to be learnt or seen by staying, for it was past twelve o'clock

and the café was gradually emptying itself of its silent, stately customers ; in the afternoon that café is as empty as a church between services. The midday call to prayer had sounded, so the devout Mohammedans had gone off to the nearest mosque. After having prayed there they would take their first meal ; their second meal is after the evening prayer, and it generally consists of kous-kous.

And now this letter must go, because Achmet is waiting to give it to Bachir, who is to post it. I am more than ever in love with Achmet ; he is as charming and effective, and quite as decorative, as a French poodle.

Your rather lonely

DORIS.

CHAPTER VI

TUNIS, May 19—.

MY DEAREST,

There is just one thing in Tunis of which I am very tired, and that is the hand of Fatima. It is so persistent and insistent, and so terribly *en evidence*. Her really ugly little paw gets on one's nerves. For an Arab and the daughter of the Prophet, she had not a pretty hand, and she certainly is most catholic and liberal-minded in the way in which she bestows it upon every creature, place and thing in Tunis, without the least respect of persons or beliefs.

Even the French seem now to be afraid to do without that uplifted hand which Allsopp so boldly converted into his trade-mark for table ale; you see it on their watch-chains and round their babies' necks, and on their horses and on almost every building. Honestly, I am not joking; you simply can't get away from the hand of Fatima, which is of course only the hand of the Carthaginian goddess Tanit carried down into Mohammedan times; you can see the exact facsimile of it on hundreds of Phœnician remains. I wonder the natives didn't build their city in the shape of her hand instead of in the shape of her father's burnous. That ubiquitous little hand, uplifted in the attitude of blessing, seems to be the only design which the cheap Italian jeweller in the Rue d'Église can invent for pens, brooches, pendants, watch-chains—for everything, in fact, that can be called a "souvenir of Tunis."

When I asked why they loved that shapeless hand so dearly, I was told :

“ It keeps off the evil eye.”

When I pressed the question further, “ But why does it keep off the evil eye ? ” the Italian shrugged his shoulders :

“ It is the hand of the daughter of the Prophet.”

“ Oh yes, I know,” I said ; “ but why does the hand of the daughter of the Prophet keep the evil eye off you who are children of Christ ? ”

Again he shrugged his shoulders :

“ *Non so*, signorina ; it has become the custom ; everyone wears it here.”

But in the East, when you begin to think of superstitions, there is nothing left for it but to ignore them all, or else to be eaten up by them, for if you paid heed to the half of what you knew after the shortest visit, as well as to your own, what a slave you would be. In Tunis, for instance, Friday is the lucky day, yet at home one has learned to give Friday a wide berth.

Sometimes a crescent formed from the joined horns of a cow, or by a horseshoe, with its ends turned upwards, is used to represent the uplifted hand of Fatima over a street door or on the roof of a building. If you hold up your hand and close the middle fingers and keep the thumb and the little finger upright you have a crescent, or two joined horns or a horseshoe. This I give you *not* from my own surmising, but on reliable authority. I myself should have thought that this crescent was more likely to be the half-moon of the goddess Astarte, which, in conjunction with the emblem of the sun-god Baal, has served the

Mohammedans as their standard in battle. This familiar device of the Arab you can see on tablets dedicated to the goddess Astarte at Carthage.

Fatima, according to the Prophet, was one of the world's three perfect women. No. 1 was his first wife Khadijah, who proved her faith in him by marrying him when he was her hired servant; No. 2 was the Virgin Mary (this I consider very large-minded of the Prophet); and No. 3 was his favourite daughter, Fatima.

I believe an Arab is really afraid to make any object without putting that little hand on it somewhere; I should not be surprised if I found it ingeniously worked into the braid which embroiders my burnous, and woven into the material itself as a sort of watermark.

How involved in superstitions they are! I can call it nothing else; they seem to spend the greater part of their time in avoiding the evil eye and in dodging bad luck. This morning I said I would give five francs for something in the bazaar. Mohammed was transacting the bargaining; he repeated my offer, but to avoid using the unlucky number five, he said, "Madame will give you the total of my hand," which is the ordinary expression for five. He was speaking in French to the agent of the Arab shopkeeper, so I could not help hearing the remark and saying:

"Tell me, Mohammed, why does a fatalist ever try to do anything for himself? If he is not accountable for his actions, surely his sins are not his own? With the Mohammedan everything is ordained by Allah. Therefore how can you think that little glass hand can keep off evil, if Allah has already arranged that this evil is to be your

portion? I heard you take the trouble just now to circumvent the unlucky word five, and yet in your heart you know that what has to be, has to be, hand or no hand. You cannot help yourself."

He answered me very neatly, I thought.

"A soldier, madame, is not held accountable if his side does not win the battle, but if he does not do his best he is not considered worthy to be a soldier of the Khalif."

When I ask Achmet in the morning if it is going to be fine, he simply says, "Allah knows." My ridiculous mind has been running on superstitions to-day for this reason, that just as I was sitting down to write to you, the bare-legged Bachir deserted his seat at the front door and came up to my room wreathed with smiles; they lapped over each other like the gentle waves that kiss a sunny beach. With many salaams he pointed with brown eyes and bare brown arms to the farthest end of the square hall just outside my bedroom door, and invited me to come out. I did so, and to my astonishment there stood Mabrucka with her little onyx-eyed baby slung on her back in the wrappings of her one and wonderful garment.

But it was Mabrucka shorn of her smiles and shorn of her jewels, except for the two breast-brooches which make her frock each time she puts it on.

Oh, weary little Mabrucka! where are your delicious smiles? Mabrucka without smiles was like the south without sunshine.

It was a pathetic little figure that sprang eagerly towards me to entreat me and to greet me; but alas! I shall never know half of all the beautiful things she said. Bedouins

speak in even more Biblical language than the Arabs of the cities. But what I did understand was that she was imploring me to do something. She pointed to her neck and arms and ankles and then shook her head, and once more began with all the eloquence of her race to plead my pity.

Delicious child of the south, if she had pleaded long enough, even my wedding ring would have been hers, if that had been what she most coveted. I turned to Bachir and said: "Achmet, Achmet." Bachir understood, and his long brown legs, surmounted by a long cheap white cotton shirt, worn like a jebba, took the white marble stair in three bounds.

In less than two minutes he reappeared with Achmet, Achmet the graceful, all red and blue and white, and exquisitely shaven. Achmet, what should I do without you?

To have Achmet always near one is almost as good as possessing a magician's wand. If I ask for peacocks' tongues he brings them to me; if I want pearls in my wine he drops them in like ice; if I say I want the tasty kous-kous at my next meal, it appears hot and steaming and savoury—just the very dish, I'm sure, which Rebekah cooked to bamboozle old Isaac on that eventful occasion. Bachir springs about with the stealthy swiftness of a cat. Achmet moves towards me with a slim, upright dignity which never fails to inspire me with envy and admiration.

"Please, Achmet, ask Mabrucka what she wants," I said.

A torrent of Arabic from the more hopeful Bedouin was the result of his question.

Achmet silenced her.

"She has come," he said, "to entreat you to restore to her *one* of the charms you bought yesterday." Achmet was not at all sympathetic. "She has no right to trouble you," he said. "I will send her away at once if you like, but she says it is of no value to anyone but herself; it is not beautiful, and so great a lady as yourself would not wear it, but without it she can neither pray nor work nor sleep. She has walked all over the city and bazaar trying to find you; she has been to every hotel."

"But why did she sell it to me?" I asked.

"The sight of so much money tempted her, she says; it was wrong of her to part with it, for a holy man who has crossed the desert three times gave it to her with his blessing. All last night her baby was sick, and before dawn this morning a camel was stolen from her husband. All to-day she has been followed by misfortune."

"Which one of the many charms was it, Achmet?" I asked; "I do hope it was only one of the many hands of Fatima—there were three big ones on the chain she wore across her breast, and five on the silver dog-collar, and ever so many little ones hanging from the chain of coral and white metal which was suspended from brooch to brooch across her chest."

"No," he said, "it is not the hand of Fatima, it is a black charm which she wore on the chain across her breast."

I went and fetched all the Bedouin baubles and held them all out for view. As I did so, Mabrucka leapt at them, just as a panther in the Zoo leaps at a piece of raw beef, and at once seized hold of the lumpy-looking brown heart which I told you was made of compressed herbs. With the cry of "El hamdou-lillah!" ("Thanks be to Allah!") her

brown fingers fastened on it, and she was again Mabrucka of the delicious smiles.

Well, needless to say, I gave her back her heart-of-herbs, although her anxiety to possess it at once gave it an extravagant value in my eyes; but what else could I do? She had all too effectually "knocked at the heart of my generosity," so I watched her once again bite through the black horsehair, which fastened the heart to the chain, with her wicked little teeth, just as she had eagerly bitten off her chains to offer them to me in the bazaar, and then drop the black amulet down the front of her gown. The next moment she was gone, afraid, I suppose, that I might repent of my generosity—gone with her precious black charm lying hidden safely between her shapely white breasts. Ah, you little happy, soulless, provoking Mabrucka! I wonder what those little white teeth of yours have not bitten in anger or in love? But I *have* my compensation, for it pleases me to think of your shapely form sleeping soundly under a desert moon, with that heart of herbs reposing where you dropped it. The Bedouins may wander only where Allah guides them, but I am sure Mabrucka takes up her abode with love (like all the other free things of earth and sky) where Nature calls her.

* * * * *

And now there is one little thing I must confess to you before I tell you about the tombs of the Beys, and the saints' tombs, and all the other holy things I have seen, and that is that I *nearly* flirted with Jack last night—only it takes two to flirt, and *he* wouldn't. I wanted to make him forget his "beautiful lady," as I call her; for honestly,

dear, he is just a little foolish—he has let his boat go home to England without him because “madame is here,” as Mohammed said (I know that is the reason, though as yet *he* doesn’t), and I begin to see trouble ahead if he doesn’t take care; something happened in the bazaar to-day which he won’t tell me, something which has made the grave Mohammed graver than usual.

But about my confession. Well, we went to one of the French cafés on the boulevard after a most delicious dinner in the hotel, and listened to an excellent band and drank extremely good coffee, and watched the most curious mixture of Orientals and Europeans go by in the half-light under the trees. It is very significant to see the East straying into the West in search of forbidden fruits, for all these indulgences of the flesh, which flourish in the French city, are strictly forbidden by the Prophet. “Singing and music generally,” he said, “cause hypocrisy in the heart—the devil uses music as his most powerful instrument.” It was certainly either the devil or Jack’s good angel which tempted me to try to win his thoughts back from the perfumer’s shop in the souk to the woman he once loved; but I used my poor woman’s wiles, and lowered my own estimation of myself, with little effect, for when I was saying, in rather a flirtatious way, “How strange it is, Jack, that *you* and *I* should be sitting here alone in a café in Tunis,” or some other equally fatuous thing which the atmosphere and the situation prompted, he suddenly said:

“Couldn’t you get her to come to lunch?”

“My dear Jack,” I said, “get who—of whom *are* you talking? I was asking you a question!” Then the foolish thing flushed like a girl right up to the roots of his hair.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he said, "how rude of me! Yes, I suppose it is awfully queer that we should be here."

I laughed. "Perhaps we aren't sitting here," I said. "What is there to prove that we are, even if I pinch you, which you thoroughly well deserve; I mightn't really be pinching you, because perhaps you aren't here really, and perhaps there isn't any you at all and everything is just nothing. Do you ever stop doing a thing, Jack, because it suddenly dawns upon you that there isn't any you at all, and that what you imagine you are doing is all a part of the great Nothing? I think it is positively terrifying to feel that there is absolutely nothing to prove that there is *really* anything, not even the hand of Fatima."

"Oh, chuck it!" Jack said, not too ceremoniously, "for that way lies madness; I didn't think *you* were a bit that sort."

"It's the climate," I said, laughing at his amazed face. "Arabs are frightfully 'like that,' as you call it; they sit with their arms folded, thinking and thinking and thinking of the past until hysteria claims them with its mailed claws. 'Nerves,' Mohammed tells me, are as common with these indolent do-nothing, care-nothing Moors and Arabs as with the most exhausted speculators of Wall Street."

But good heavens, dear, the post is going and Bachir is waiting!

Hastily yours,

DORIS.

CHAPTER VII

TUNIS, *May 19—.*

How often I say to myself that nothing shall interfere with my letters to you, and Allah wills it otherwise—see what it is to be in the land of the Prophet! The last interruption, just as I sat down to write, was a message from Mohammed to say that the whole city of Tunis is to be illuminated to-night in honour of the French fleet, which has just come into port. It will be rather interesting to see how the Arabs carry out this order. Will they bring out their fine rock-crystal chandeliers to illuminate the souks, as they did on the night of the Prophet's birthday, and will they convert the square in front of the Kasba into an orchard hanging with grape-like bunches of red fruit (they have a beautiful way of clustering their Japanese lanterns together inside fine hoops of iron in the shape of a bunch of grapes)? Just fancy a big square with a garden in the centre of it full of trees burdened with huge clusters of bright tomato-coloured fruit. The Japanese could have imagined nothing finer in effect. There was no other note of colour—just the green leaves and the glorious tomato-orange of the lanterns. To-night the whole affair will be a matter of command, not a labour of love as it was for the Prophet.

But I want to take you back to the second day of my stay here, the second day of the Prophet's fête, when I visited the Tombs of the Beys. You can see the dome of the mosque-like building from my bedroom window in this hotel. I want particularly to tell you about it

because, at the time I saw them, I had no idea that I was seeing such an important monument; but even a few days reveal much to one in Tunis, and I know now that it was of all others the most difficult Mohammedan monument to visit in Tunis. Jack has failed utterly, in spite of all the influence he has brought to bear on the subject, whereas I did the whole thing in a very casual way for half-a-franc, on the one day in the year in which the sacred spot may be defiled by the feet of unbelievers.

"Les Tombeaux des Beys," as the building calls itself on the picture post-cards (and here let me add that I have learned more of what there was to be seen, and what is worth going to in Tunis, from illustrated post-cards than from any other source), is a square classical building, not at all Arab in appearance *outside* except for the four low white domes crowned by one big green one which appear above the flat roof. An ordinary marabout's tomb is just a little square whitewashed koubba with a dome on the top of it, exactly similar to the little Cubola in the lemon-grove outside Palermo.

The "Tombeaux des Beys" is built of brick divided into panels with strips of white marble decorated with rather delicate and charming Renaissance designs. It has a cornice and architrave just like a Greek temple, also charming antique columns (pickings from Carthage, I suppose) sunk into each corner.

Women guard the tombs by day and men by night, so when Mohammed knocked at the door it was cautiously opened, and I was admitted through a chink. Then it was instantly shut in Mohammed's face, for the dark-eyed pale-faced girl who admitted me was unveiled and an Arab.

By the Waters of Carthage

And now let me think how I can bring before your mind the vastness and simplicity and whiteness and coolness of the whole thing—this gigantic family vault.

In the mirror of my mind it remains (unimportant as I thought it at the time) one of the most Oriental things which I have seen so far in Tunis.

Imagine an enormous building completely lined—walls, floor, and roof—with white marble; then picture to yourself the floor covered with white marble tombs very like Carthaginian sarcophagi, arranged in even rows and all exactly similar in shape, the distinguishing mark of the male defunct being a fez carved in granite which surmounts a little column at the head of the marble tomb. There was not another thing in the building, so why it was so lofty I can't understand. At first I imagined that as time went on the tombs would be piled one on the top of another until the place was full. But not at all. The ugly girl, whose bedraggled and wet appearance led me to suppose that she had just finished washing out the whole of this white chamber of the dead, beckoned to me to follow her. I went with her through one room after another until I grew weary of them, for each one was exactly similar in architecture and character to the first, and all of them were spread with white tombs. A dome in the centre of the roof is evidently an essential feature of all important burial-vaults.

Having seen one burial-chamber, you had seen them all; nothing fresh developed, and as the girl couldn't speak a word of anything but Arabic, it was hopeless to try to find out any details about them.

An old woman presently appeared from somewhere

and joined in our pilgrimage to a new and more distant vault which was in course of construction. Without its coffins it looked very much like a dairy.

I did not discover why these Tombs of the Beys should be guarded so jealously from the eyes of unbelievers, for there was nothing the least mosque-like in the building, at least so far as I was able to see, and there are quite a number of saints' tombs exactly similar to these marble ones, only made of wood, exposed to the full view of everyone in the bazaars and native city. One saint asked to be buried in the centre of a busy thoroughfare in the souks so that his memory should never be forgotten, for it is necessary to step aside as you pass his tomb, the street is so narrow at that point. In the cemeteries, of course, you can't go inside saints' tombs where any sort of religious ceremony is performed. But here there was nothing but four white walls, a domed roof, and a floor covered with white marble tombs.

I saw the whole thing in about fifteen minutes and was out again into the dazzling sunshine, but that fifteen minutes certainly gave me a peep behind the Eastern veil.

I never pass an Arab or Jewish cemetery without trying to go into it, for it is only in the cemeteries that you see the upper-class Arab women.

Arab cemeteries are neither beautiful nor well kept. The graves, which are just like our graves, soon become almost lost in the tufts of rank grass and tall weeds which always flourish in cemeteries, and the short, fezzed columns of the males and the plain slabs of the women seem to have been thrust into the ground anyhow; I noticed that they never long remain perpendicular. The dreary flatness

By the Waters of Carthage

and desolation of these uncared-for, unloved cities of the dead are broken here and there by the white walls and the domes of some saint's koubba. Every cemetery has at least five or six saints' tombs; but then it is uncommonly easy to be a saint in Tunis.

You may be a saint by inheritance, or if you have had the good fortune to have been born on holy ground, or if you are not quite right in your mind. The ordinary village idiot, if he be an Arab, is a saint. It is rather dear of them, I think, to believe that lunatics and idiots and all who are mentally afflicted are the particular children of Allah, and therefore to be revered and treated as holy. They are supposed to possess certain supernatural powers in exchange for the sense in which they are lacking. This is the law of compensation.

Mohammed says that this rather nice idea, which certainly makes the lives of the mentally afflicted a blessing instead of a curse to their parents and saves them from ridicule and ill-treatment, is naturally much abused by idle good-for-nothings who won't work, and who pretend they are lunatics or idiots. The simple and devout Arabs, knowing no better, treat them as saints and support them. The faithful, when they go to visit the tomb of a marabout, take with them all sorts of useful things—food and drink, and even articles of household use. As the children or the relatives of the saintship have a right to appropriate the offerings, naturally a saintship in a family is an asset; it is almost as valuable as a "family living"—in fact it is one. But as a rule these present-day saints are really very dear, simple, holy men who exercise the virtue of self-denial to an extent even greater than the most extreme devotees of

the Catholic Church ; for it is by self-denial that they are "raised to the altar," so to speak. In real Arab parlance, saints are called "welees"—doesn't that bring back *The Arabian Nights* to you?

How I used to love the welees, and how little I ever thought that I would one day see and speak to a real live one. Every Arab village has at least one saint's tomb, but I don't know if every village natural is honoured with a fine tomb—I fancy only those who are very specially revered in their lifetime. The Mohammedans love to tell you that the beautiful St Louis of France died a good Mussulman in Tunis. He is known generally as "Sidi Bou-Said," and Cardinal Lavigerie, the founder of the White Fathers and of the cathedral at Carthage, is called the "Marabout Rouge."

There are major and minor saints, of course. The tiled koubbas in the public cemeteries generally belong to the latter; the former have fine mosques for their tombs. The monument always lies below the centre dome. A great number of the lesser saints increase in importance after death. At the same time I have seen the people in the bazaars run after a holy man, who looked to me like an ordinary beggar, and kiss the hem of his burnous, and entreat him to "bless their children."

Some Monday I am going to see the procession of Arab women visiting the tomb of the popular woman saint of Tunis. It is built on a high rock overlooking the city. The bones of this particular saint were lost for centuries until a famous seer divined where they had been hidden for safety. A search was made, and sure enough her skeleton was found buried in the exact spot where the seer had divined. It is

one of the great sights of Tunis, the Monday procession of veiled women who toil up the hill to the white mosque which holds the saint's bones.

It is strange how things are gradually sorting themselves in my mind. For instance, as I sat in one of these queer Arab cemeteries to-day I suddenly realised what the splendid candles which decorate the perfumers' shops in the souks are used for. Seated unobserved behind a cypress-tree close to one of the saints' tombs, I could see white figures one after another thread their way in and out of the low graves and tall burnt grass until they reached a saint's tomb. Then they would descend some steps which led into the domed vault, and, after kissing the threshold, draw out from beneath their enveloping yadash a bundle of these self-same perfumers' candles. I dared not of course go inside, but in my imagination I could see the figures go through their prescribed ceremony of walking round the tomb, always from left to right, stooping to kiss or reverently touch its four corners, reciting in a low chant some sura from the Koran in that curious Oriental monotone which one always hears in the Koran schools in the bazaars.

After a few moments the white figures returned. They had made their observances and had repeated their invocations, and, let us hope, left their troubles in the little whitewashed koubba in that silent city of the dead.

As they tottered back to the main avenue of the cemetery (for no upper-class Arab woman can do more than totter), I wondered to myself what manner of mind it was that lay hidden behind their black masks, and what was the nature of the trouble that filled their Oriental hearts. In

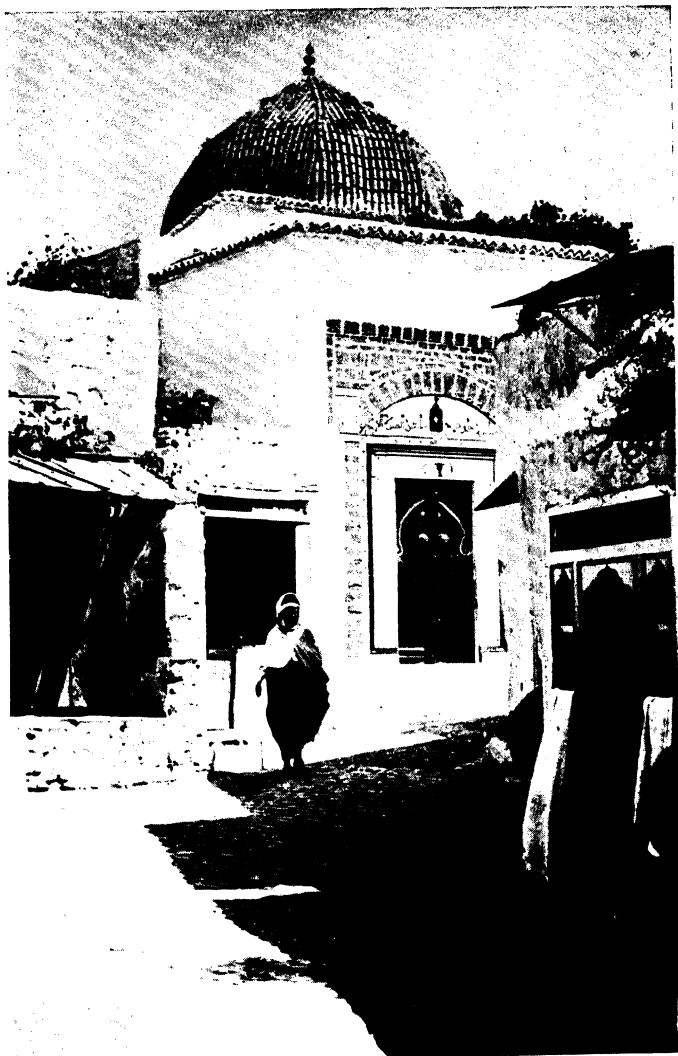


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE TOMB OF A MARABOUT (SAINT)

[To face p. 114]

another moment they had stepped awkwardly into the carriages which were waiting for them on the main avenue of the cemetery (dull, ill-kept-looking cabs with wooden shutters instead of windows), and the eunuch coachmen had whipped up the horses and off went my mysterious visitors, back to their harems.

As time passed, on and on they came, these white figures, all filled with the same desire to invoke the aid of some saint in their trouble. Each one bore in her hidden arms a bundle of fine candles.

This visit to the tombs is the weekly dissipation of all Arab women in Tunis. If I had to be born an Arab woman I would certainly pray to be born a hard-working homeless Bedouin, for they at least have liberty and love and freedom; and rightly too, for they splendidly support their lazy lords, who show a pretty taste in women, and, I must admit, know how to manage them.

One of these white figures in the cemetery came up and spoke to me. I was walking up the long cypress avenue which divides the cemetery in two. She spoke only Arabic, and all that I could see of her face, of course, was the white and brown of her gleaming eyes; so this was the nature of our conversation; she pointed to the city with a very henna-stained finger. Which reminds me that "a dye-woman" in Tunis takes the place of our manicurist in London; she earns her living by bearing gossip to the harems and dyeing with henna the tips of the ladies' fingers, the soles of their feet, and the palms of their hands.

I looked towards Tunis, and nodded.

She laid her head down on her two hands and closed her heavy eyelids.

Yes, I was sleeping in Tunis, so again I nodded.

She looked cautiously down the long avenue and across the grass-covered graves.

Yes, I was quite alone—no male kind were near, so a third time I nodded.

Then very quickly she separated the two pieces of the black crêpe which covered her face, and, pushing the one up over her forehead and pulling the other down to her chin, stood before me uncovered and smiling. Her lips were painted a very strong crimson and her fine eyes were heavily outlined with kohl.

I smiled and nodded to her as much as to say that I thought her beautiful. She examined me up and down very carefully, but with no air of similar approval, for you must remember that according to the *code Arabe* the skin of a woman's face should be white, not pink, and her eyes should be as dark as the sky at night, and not blue.

The next moment her yashmak was pulled down again, and she went on her way full of a woman's foolish wonder.

I have not yet seen an Arab funeral, which is rather strange considering that all the cemeteries are quite close to the city, although not actually in the city itself. But there is one thing about them which strikes me as very odd—the orthodox Arabs, who are as a rule so singularly free from all shams and vulgar affectations in their life-time, have a curious habit of showing off at funerals. The corpse is taken to the cemetery in a gorgeous coffin covered with splendid trappings, but directly it is inside the gate it is taken out of this fine undertaker's casket and buried

in a very shallow grave in scarcely any grave-clothes. In the grave a little stone cushion is placed under the head, so that the face can be turned towards Mecca. But I should imagine that the French authorities of Tunis to-day demand some sort of a coffin, and a regulation depth of grave.

Jewish cemeteries here are the oddest things in the world. When there are no mourners in them, they are simply enclosed pieces of flat ground paved all over with white marble. But when you come to inspect one quite closely you find that this field of marble is made up of different pieces all of exactly the same size and shape, closely cemented together. Each of these neat divisions represents a family tomb. The nothingness of the whole thing is appalling. When mourners are there, with their towering head-dresses supporting a drapery of white which falls right over them to the ground, a Jewish cemetery presents one of the weirdest scenes imaginable. When I first saw these fat Jewesses all seated on their feet on the plain of glittering white marble, I could scarcely believe it was true—they didn't look the least bit like human beings, but far more like an encampment of white bell-shaped tents pitched on a plain of snow. These Tunisian Jewesses are the most mediæval-looking objects I have ever seen ; it is incredible that any woman in this practical twentieth century should still be wearing such ridiculously unpractical clothes. The male Jew has little to distinguish him in his dress from the male Arab except that he generally wears darker colours, but the Jewess is like nothing under heaven and earth but her own absurd Tunisian self. Her towering gold head-dress under its falling canopy of white, her splendidly embroidered

pantaloon, her gold and silver leggings and her ugly little puffed-sleeve dressing-gown-jacket of rose-coloured silk, which only half conceals her hideous figure, are all her own.

But before I "switch you off" cemeteries I must tell you one very odd thing, which you may know already, but which I did not know until I came here, and this is that the American Consul (Col. John Howard) who wrote the words of *Home, Sweet Home*, lies buried in the English Christian cemetery of St George, in almost the heart of Tunis. He was born in Mass., U.S.A., in 1792, and died in Tunis in 1853. This old cemetery was granted to England at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

It will amuse you to know that Mohammed and I have long talks about the Morocco question, and each day I wonder less why the Arabs hate the French as they do. When I first came here it seemed to me that they ought to be deeply and everlastingly grateful for having their city under such excellent administration, but every day one learns their true feelings on the subject, and how cruelly and unnecessarily they were insulted in the past. As an Arab lives ever in the past he is not likely to forget or forgive, whatever prosperity the future may bring him.

Just think of it! For twelve great centuries Moorish rule in Tunis was unbroken, and to-day it has vanished for ever into thin air! Why should ancient dynasties be less respected than ancient buildings? When I look at the white palace of Bardo, I can't help feeling full of sorrow for that foolish and pathetic figure, the Bey. He is, so to speak, a State prisoner in his own capital, a prisoner in "The White," as Diodorus Siculus christened Tunis

eighteen centuries ago. (And here let me mention that Freeman says that before ever there was a Carthage, Tunis existed.) By the courtesy of his discourteous invaders, the Bey is permitted to retain six hundred soldiers as a personal bodyguard, while the French have a garrison of ten thousand men. Alas, how are the mighty fallen! Just think of it! The Bey of Tunis—how the very name suggests mystery, and power and despotism!—the Bey who for twelve centuries kept the whole of the Mediterranean under his sway and at bay with his fine Barbary corsairs and countless armies—that he to-day should be of less importance in the capital of his own kingdom than the head official of the French post office!—for that is virtually so. All the same, no visitor in Tunis would ever guess that there was a mailed fist, below the perfectly fitting French glove, which makes Tunis as peaceful as it is; for the Arabs have an outward semblance of managing their own affairs. One cannot help wondering if the day will again come when they will rise up and shake off this hated foreign yoke, as they shook off the yoke of Charles V., or if indeed the long day of Moorish greatness has passed for ever. The post office, finance, education, and all public works are under French control and managed by French officials, assisted by a Mohammedan Prime Minister and Secretary of State. Europeans are of course tried in French courts, but the natives are tried in the *uzara* and *sharaa*.

There is a legend with the Arabs that God dedicated the date-trees especially to them and that all the date-trees in the world really belong to them, so they accordingly had to conquer every country in which dates were found.

By the Waters of Carthage

"It is a pretty idea, Mohammed," I said, "but what is to happen now? The date-palms are still soaring into the blue all over Tunisia and Morocco, but so is the French flag. The desert people could not live without their date-trees?"

Poor proud Mohammed. He didn't answer. I felt so ashamed when he told how the Arabs hoped and hoped, and hung on to the finest hair of a belief that when England really understood how her old ally was being insulted and attacked and plundered by the French, she would interfere, and she would come to their help. "But England never moved her little finger," he said. "It was hard, madame, to believe that England knew and understood all the injustice, the breach of international law, the amazing audacity of the whole thing, and stood quietly aloof—England, who had always come to the aid and rescue of the oppressed and of the unjustly attacked! How we loved your English queen and trusted her! But to-day, all Europeans are the same—they are our natural enemies."

At the present time the Bey is ill, so I have not seen him; as a rule he comes into Tunis from his palace in the country every Monday and Thursday.

Before closing I must just tell you that Jack has been reading up the laws of Mohammedan divorce.

He suddenly announced at dinner to-night that an Arab can divorce his wife three times, and each time take her back; also that an orthodox Mohammedan is exhorted not to marry a Christian, so that explains the fortune-teller's earnestness over the subject of our beautiful lady and her Mohammedan lord.

But on no account can a woman divorce her husband,

although she may return to her own people if he ill-treats her, and take her fine mother-of-pearl chest and her dowry with her, and marry again if she chooses.

I tell you all this just to show you the working of Jack's mind.

Yours lovingly,

DORIS.

CHAPTER VIII

TUNIS, *May 19—*.

MY DEAR MAN,

The plot thickens ! The romance of the souks flourishes like the proverbial bay-tree, and Jack is a dear Jack-Ass ! Who do you think has usurped the seat outside the shop of Monsieur Ajeeb, perfumer—the seat of the “ Beautiful Lady ”—but la petite Belge.

It appears that from the first moment that the Moor let his devouring eyes light on that piece of dimpled prettiness, he has been, to use Mohammed’s expression, “ a disordered slave of love.”

Having been “ nursed in the bosom of indulgence and reared in the lap of prosperity ” (these also are Mohammed’s words), all he really desires is—what is beyond his reach.

The possession of an English wife did at first give him a curious pleasure, because of the novelties as well as the triumph of the situation.

Monsieur Ajeeb is an æsthete as well as a sensualist ; his feasts of love must not be wholly carnal, they must be accompanied by beauty of colour, beauty of sound, and beauty of form. Mohammed says his little dinners are quite renowned, for at them every sense is satisfied. In this particular the fastidious Moor is like the cultivated Japanese, whose dinners must not only tempt his stomach to eat, but delight his soul with music, his eyes with the rhythm of dancing, and his thoughts with the psychology

of flowers. Though the etiquette of flowers is not carried to such a fine point with the Arabs as with the Japanese, still they have their very important significances and virtues.

Of course I don't mean even to hint that la petite Belge is permanently installed on that gossiping-seat in the souks, but the situation for the time being amuses her. Her attempted flirtation with Jack proved a complete failure, Jack being blind to all female beauty except that of the lady with eyes like a lake in the desert.

This is how it happened. When la Belge's husband had recovered from his hallucination (which he now totally refuses to believe), he began loafing about the bazaars again, and his wife, recognising Monsieur Ajeeb as the Moor who gave us coffee when her husband was borne off head-and-heels by Jack and Mohammed, got into the habit of stopping at his shop to have a little chat with him.

All unintentionally her very smile is love, so the Moor became after each meeting more and more enslaved by his passion for her. Anyhow, before his wife appeared at her usual hour one morning, accompanied by her two servants, Monsieur Ajeeb had told la petite Belge that the first glimpse he ever had of her, in the café that morning, "had occasioned him a thousand sighs." And she, the careless little flirt, did no more than give him back her gentle laugh, which is low and wooing.

The next morning, when she appeared in the bazaar without the Angry Saxon, but accompanied by that foolish nigger in the green jebba whom I patronised the first day, Monsieur Ajeeb invited her to take his wife's seat outside his shop and sent an Arab off for some refreshment, which

consisted of a sort of sweet condiment made of pomegranate seeds and honey.

She accepted both with a childish gaiety which well becomes her.

"You must show me the secrets of your perfumery," she said, "and explain to me the virtue of your scents."

The Moor, who was now no longer the sad and sighing lover, proved himself a most agreeable and interesting companion. The honey had made la petite Belge thirsty, so she now sipped a delightful sherbet of sugar and violet water, and smoked scented cigarettes. To retain her, Monsieur Ajeeb told her Arab legends and many tragedies of the bazaars, and recited love-poems to her which stood the test, let me tell you, of translating into French better than into English. They did not shock the little Belgian, but amused her highly; she thinks Mohammedans are the most *devout* and the most *sensual* people in the world.

The time passed so quickly that she was surprised when the noonday call to prayer caused a general movement in the souks. The Arabs, who had been lying on the floors of their dens wrapped up in their white burnouses, got slowly up, and slipping their white-stockinged feet into their yellow slippers sauntered majestically off to the nearest mosque, which is never very far off; then the barbers' shops emptied themselves of their gossiping customers, and even the cafés became desolate, for if their occupants were not all devout, they were all at least hungry, and the Mohammedan never eats till after the midday muezzin.

La petite Belge looked at the Moor.

"It is already midday, and your wife—she has not come?"

He threw up his eyes.

"Does she not come every day?"

"Not unless I wish it."

"You will wish it to-morrow?"

"Will madame be in the souks to-morrow?" He bowed to la petite Belge, who read his meaning quite clearly.

She answered—like a pigeon cooing.

He handed her some beautiful roses which she had watched him buy, without speaking one word, from a tottering old Arab woman.

"We attach much meaning to flowers," he said, "they are part of our unspoken language. All Arabs have two languages; the one they speak means less than the one they express by signs."

"You bought your roses by signs," she said. "Is this language of flowers and signs difficult? Could a Christian learn it? You Orientals are so very mysterious, you have a sign-code for almost everything."

"A good master makes all learning simple," he said; "and there are two languages which need no teaching—they are common to all the world."

"Love and hate, I suppose you mean, Monsieur Ajeeb? But now I must say *au revoir*. I keep you from your prayers. Another time you will teach me the languages which *do* require a master."

* * * * *

And so it is tacitly understood that the little Belgian may occupy the seat in Monsieur Ajeeb's shop just so long as it amuses her. It is outside the shop, my dear

husband, and the Angry Saxon deserves a good lesson. She is no fool, but as fond of fun as a kitten, and the Moor is her ball of bright worsted for the present. Besides, you must try to remember that this fine Moor keeps no ordinary scent shop. He doesn't at all belong to the shopkeeping class in England; all Arabs are taught some trade, so that they can be self-supporting if misfortune robs them of their wealth, and as I told you, it also serves to hide their wealth.

"Perhaps if I go to the Souk-el-Attarin," she said to me, "and learn that flower-language and amuse the vain Andalusian, then madame his wife will be free to walk in the French town."

I laughed. "You little intriguer," I said; "will your big husband find our 'lady of the sorrowful eyes' amusing?"

"Oh—Jean!" she said. "I did not think of Jean—nothing ever amuses him. I was thinking of your—of your—of your friend," she got it out at last. "He would be amused, I think; and after all, Tunis is Tunis—why not amuse ourselves; I am learning a great deal——"

"I am sure of it, my dear," I said. And now to proceed more quickly, although the Arab motto warns us to "proceed slowly, for haste is from the Devil." But if that be true their love must come straight from his Satanic Majesty, for the Arab, who proceeds slowly in everything else, makes violent haste in love.

Well, this morning, when Jack and I were at the Place Bab-Souika buying some pottery, a curious thing happened which all belongs to the same story. But just let me tell you that the Place Bab-Souika is one of the most fascinating

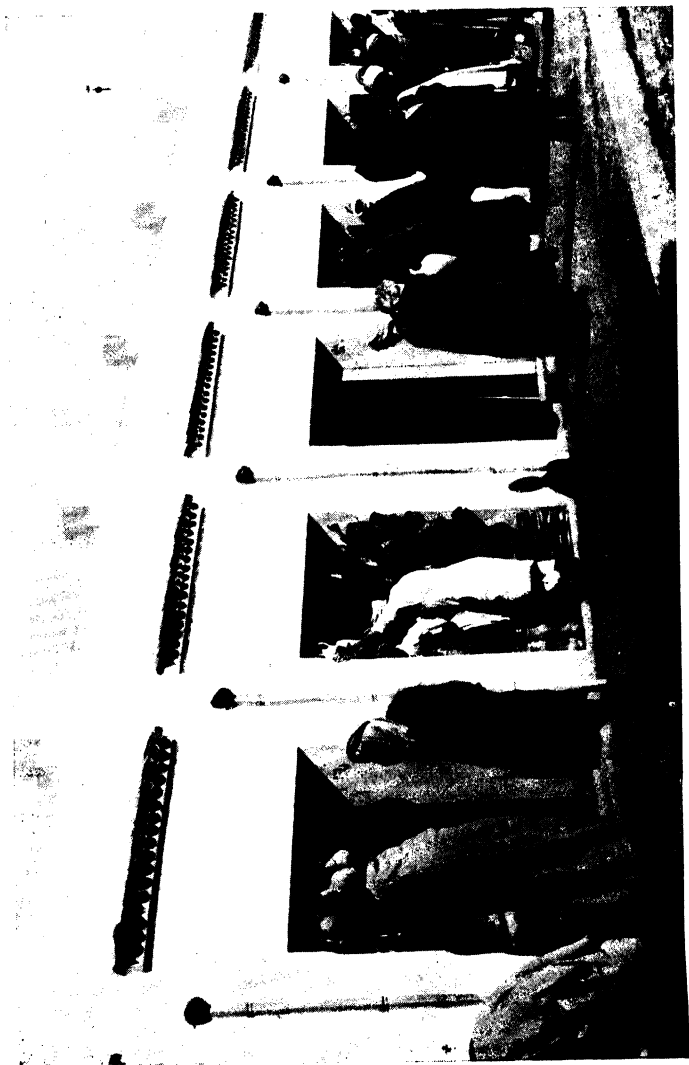


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE SOUK OF THE POTTERS

[To face p. 126]

things in Tunis. You can take a tram to it from the Porte de France, as you can to almost every point in Tunis and to all the little suburbs whose squares give them their names. There are three typical "Places"—the Place Bab-Djedid, which is always crowded with the most characteristic of lower-class Orientals, unadulterated with southern Europeans; the Place Halfaouine, with its huge ~~un~~oriental-looking mosque and popular evening cafés; and the Place Bab-Souika, which is surrounded by pottery shops and littered over with poor Arabs in cheap white shirts and rough brown jebbas, and aged niggers as black as jet with white woolly hair. From the trams I had often seen these particular pottery shops, and noticed that they contained the green-glazed ~~var~~-shaped drums and bread-coloured pottery, painted and ornamented with prehistoric-looking black animals, also the most *Arabian-Nights*-looking water-coolers of pierced arabesque terra-cotta. In the illustrations of *The Arabian Nights* which I have with me, I see the same articles of domestic use as they sell in the Arab shops in Tunis. When I am too footsore and tired to walk another step, we—Mohammed and I—go to the Porte de France and wait till a tram comes along, and get into it; for in Tunis any tram is bound to take you to something interesting, and as you skid along, you see a strange and wonderful kaleidoscope of everyday incidents and fresh revelations of Oriental life. The trams, which of course are windowless, and delightfully curtained with grey holland, are always full of natives of every sort and kind, for neither the city Arab nor the Jew ever walks if he can ride or drive.

Of course, they look absurdly out of place there: electric trams don't seem the proper environment for the stately

apostolic figures of the male Jews and Arabs or for the thirteenth-century-looking head-dresses of the obese Jewesses, or for the yashmaked and black-veiled figures of the Arab women.

With my mind fixed on purchasing some of the famous Tunisian pottery, I went out very early, unequipped, however, with my useful but hideous token of the middle-class English housewife, a "string bag." When Jack's arms were full of green-glazed drums; filigreed water-coolers with absurdly long necks and bodies shaped like lifebuoys made of that pierced terra-cotta; and his pockets were bulging out with kneeling camels, as life-like as though they had come from the hand of a Japanese; and little kous-kous saucers of pale pottery painted with designs in dark brown; and other endless things of joy which cost from one to two sous apiece, he suggested as we passed a seed-merchant's shop that we should purchase one of the palm-leaf baskets which in Sicily you know are used for holding charcoal. You can buy these very same baskets in Tunis at seed and grain merchants' shops, where they are always full of kous-kous grain.

I agreed with him, and commenced bargaining for one which I saw hanging up in a very well-stocked shop which was managed by a dirty nigger in a tattered white burnous, who wore the hood of it over his head just like a Cappuccini monk—the poor who cannot aspire to turbans always cover their heads with the hoods of their burnouses, which stick up in a high peak in front and come well down over their faces. A common sack is often used as a substitute for a burnous, put on with one corner used as the hood and the rest of the same end opened to form the front of

the cloak. The very blackest niggers of all have a partiality for a garment which is not quite a burnous but an enormous shawl of dark brown camel's-hair cloth bordered with a long white fringe and three white stripes. I have no idea what this difference in raiment signifies—but something, you may be sure. The seed shop was situated between the store of a splendid brass-worker, who hammers and carves the most tempting vessels and boxes in copper and brass, and the stall of a poor Sicilian, which was draped and piled high with modern Italian and French rubbish of every kind. Two Arab women were standing at the brass shop, choosing some article of household use, but on seeing us they at once came into the seed and grain shop, apparently to watch what I was doing. The nigger shop-keeper, with his woolly white head, was both stupid and disobliging.

One of the two women touched me on the arm, and with a very orange-tipped finger held up three sous, at the same time pointing to a better basket than the one for which the nigger had been refusing six sous.

I thanked her by smiles and nods, and she at once made the man take the basket she had selected down from the peg on which it was hanging, and without saying a word cleverly helped me to pack my vases and camels and dishes into it. I couldn't see her face, but her long brown eyes were almost merry with laughter.

I was turning to leave the shop when the eyes of the other woman attracted my attention; they were violet eyes, and yet not really violet, but the colour of a sheet of water when clouds are passing over it. I asked myself, where have I seen those eyes before?—surely never

in an Arab woman; their eyes are as nearly black as a human eye can be. I looked at them again. Ah! now I knew; they were the eyes like a lake in the desert. Jack had evidently noticed them too, for he had gone close to where the eyes were, just on the doorstep of the shop.

Then to my surprise I heard him say to the veiled figure:

"How do you do, Madame Ajeeb? You should have covered your eyes as well."

The older woman turned round quickly. She had caught the name Ajeeb, so she knew that Jack was not addressing me.

"Jack," I said, "don't be foolish! If this is a disguise, it is evidently worn for a purpose."

The tell-tale eyes flashed back an affirmative to my suggestion. I spent a few more minutes in the shop so as to give her an excuse for either going before us or speaking to me, but only as I was passing her, on my way out, she said: "Look for me in the Court of the Lions, at the Bardo, to-morrow afternoon."

"How the deuce did she know that we were going to the Bardo to-morrow?" Jack said. "Did you tell her? When did you see her?"

"No," I said, "I never told her; Mohammed knows, and the souks have ears, Jack. Do you suppose that anybody can do anything, or even *think* anything, without these clairvoyants knowing it? I always feel that the East is only listening to, and taking an interest in, the things we *don't* say, and don't want known. I can see them carrying on their language of signs and looks over my head when I am in the bazaars; they are not really paying



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

ARAB GROCERY

[To face p. 130]

attention to what I am saying, although they seem very polite."

"Where are you off to now?" Jack said, by way of an answer. Jack does not care for abstract conversations. We had examined every hole-in-the-wall shop in the Place Bab-Souika and investigated every inch of the Rue Sidi-Mahrez, which is really a sort of miniature bazaar in itself, the far end filled up by the huge white mosque of Sidi-Mahrez with its mass of baby domes circling round the big mother one. But it is not necessary to tell you that. When Tunis has five hundred mosques (not to mention saints' tombs), there is a dome and minaret to spare for almost every street.

The Rue Sidi-Mahrez has at its entrance a number of Arab butchers' shops, full of the most disgusting-looking portions of slaughtered animals you ever saw. I'll swear that honest Christian sheep and mild-eyed calves don't have the same evil-looking insides as these Mohammedan animals. Nearer the mosque, at the far end of the street, the shops are more fascinating to foreigners, for they are full of everyday Arab household goods, which were all very far from everyday things to us. In the centre of the street there are flower shops well stocked with very expensive flowers.

I had no particular point in view, and as I had only come out to the Place Bab-Souika to buy pottery, I said: "Let's take the tram back again to the Kasba, and see if we can pick up any treasures in the rag-and-bone market in the Rue Bab-Menara."

"All right," he said; "but I vote we go to the hotel first and get rid of this truck."

I could see he didn't mind much what we did so long as the morning passed somehow, and the afternoon came, and we went to the Bardo on the morrow.

"Dear friend," I said, "I don't want to interfere—I know I have no right—but is it wise, do you think?"

"Is what wise?" he asked, with his old boyish anger flashing out.

"Will what you are doing help to make her position any the more bearable when you are gone?"

"I'm not gone yet," he said.

"When *are* you going?" I asked.

I got no answer.

"You don't know anything about her," I said, "beyond the facts that she has eyes like a lake in the desert and that she married an Oriental for his money."

"I know more than you think," he said. "I am ready to take the risk."

"Not more than I think, dear friend; for although you have not told me of all these accidental meetings, I have heard of them—the 'waddler' will do almost anything if she is well enough paid."

Jack's face, brown as it is, turned perfectly crimson.

"But," I said, "she works for the highest bidder." I paused. "Do, *do go slowly*, and remember that 'haste is from the Devil.'"

"Look here, Doris," he said, looking me full in the eyes, "I have never yet loved a woman who was not worth loving and trusting. I know I'm a bit of a fool . . . but remember that 'fools are the particular children of Allah.' And after all, what did I know about——" He stopped, evidently embarrassed.

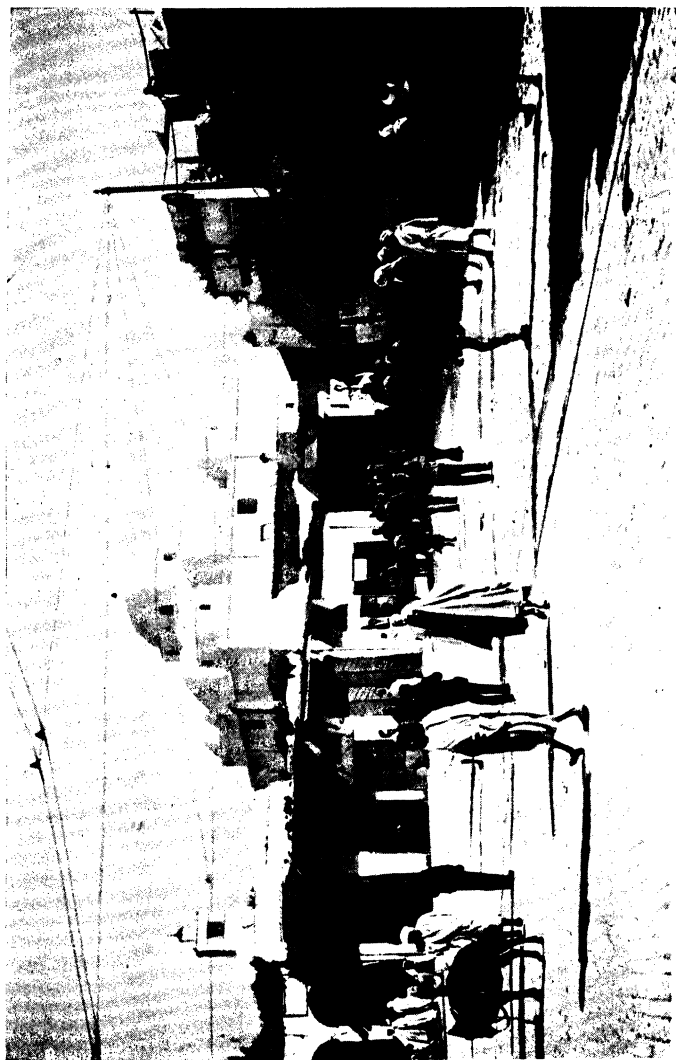


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE PLACE BAB-SOUIKA AND MOSQUE SIDI-MAHREZ

"About me?" I said.

He laughed. "Well—yes, about you."

"You were quite hard hit then, Jack," I said.

"Yes, I was *jolly* hard hit; but you aren't the sort of woman who wants the man she wouldn't marry to go on being miserable all his life, are you?"

"That's why I want you to be careful, Jack."

"Oh, care killed the cat," he said, "and never made anyone any happier; care and truth are what we all expect of each other."

* * * * *

We had seated ourselves in a tram whilst I was giving Jack this motherly advice, after having examined the exterior of the Sidi-Mahrez mosque (which is also a marabout's tomb and the largest mosque in Tunis). I never pass a mosque without longing to pass through the sea-green door and under the horseshoe arch of black-and white, supported by antique columns—and why should I be deemed unworthy? I can picture to myself a devout Moslem prostrated on the ground in a secluded corner under a dome of arabesqued plaster-work, his burnoused body lost in a devout heap of whiteness. I can imagine the exquisite beauty of the pendentive roofs covered with that delicate mashrabeyah stucco-work, which of all the fine things the Moors brought with them from Spain is to me the finest. It is lace-work in plaster—Venetian point spread over domes and arches with the profligate luxury of the East. Since the great old days of slave labour, I should imagine that even the Emperor of Morocco has had to satisfy himself with a less costly form of decoration for the interiors of his mosques and tombs. And yet, when I

look up at it, I feel it is not the work of man, but a captive dream. Some magician in *The Arabian Nights* might have commanded all the bees in Africa to cease their honey-boarding and devote their labours to the beautifying of a palace for a wonder-loving sultan.

Being excluded from every religious building here makes me all the more determined to go to Kairowan, for unless you have seen a nation at prayer as well as at play, what do you know of it? Nothing—less than nothing—that is to say, if it is a Moslem country.

In less time by far than I have taken to write this outburst of indignation we had reached the Porte de France, and left the tram and passed once more under the horse-shoe arch to my hotel.

I gave Bachir of the door-mat the pottery to take up to my bedroom, which he did not do until I told him what I had paid for the lot. "Kadesh?" ("How much?") he asked.

Three francs, I told him.

He pointed to them all—I nodded.

He looked surprised and smiled approvingly, and then sprang up the white marble stairs at his antelope pace.

At that moment Mohammed appeared. "Good morning," I said. "You see I have already been to the Place Bab-Souika and bought a ship-load of pottery." Mohammed doesn't like me doing anything without his protecting presence.

"I must make my days as long as I can," I said apologetically, "for I can't call one back, and each one that has passed means that there is one less to come; my number is up for Tunis, you know, Mohammed."

"You like Tunis, madame," he said, with his shadow

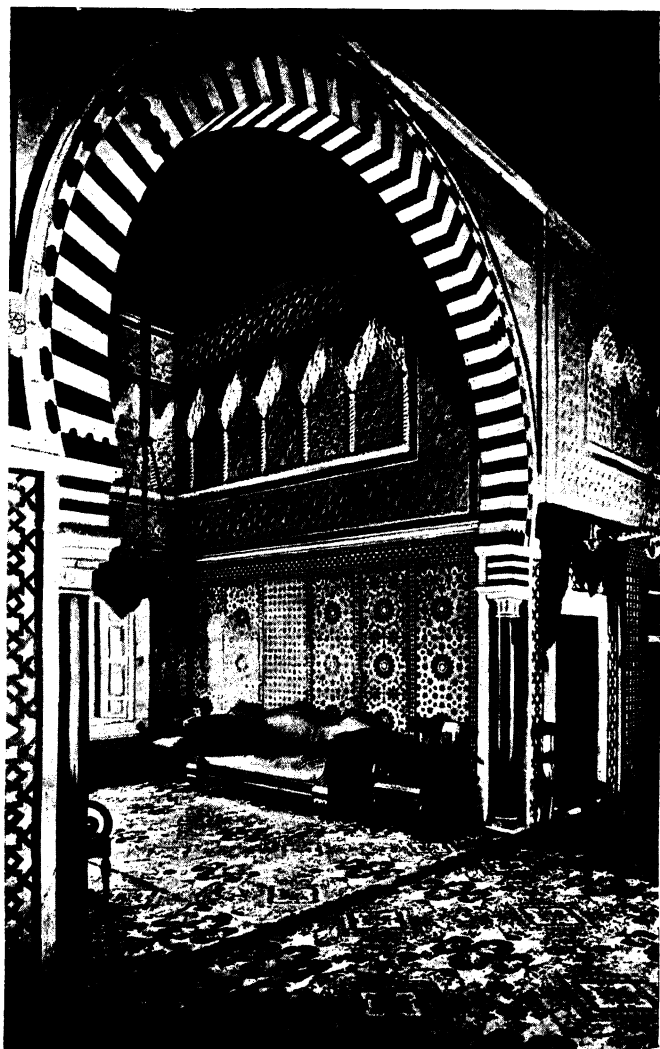


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

LACEWORK IN PLASTER

[To face p. 134

of a smile, "you carry the pleasure of it in your eyes. Would you like to live here?"

"Not unless I became a Mohammedan," I said. "It is not pleasant to feel an outsider—it is like living in a very exclusive county and feeling that you are ignored by the right set—sometimes I hate it as much as at other times I love it."

"Why do you hate it, madame?"

"Because I am on the other side of the veil, Mohammed, and I want to get behind it to the holy of holies. You are all very polite to me and hospitable, and oh! so charmingly courteous; but even you would, I suppose, rather let a cat or camel enter one of these five hundred white mosques than me, for you allow animals to have souls and a possible hereafter? Yet we have the same God, and we both have the same fundamental strivings after truth; but just because I carry in my heart, very feebly! the image of the simple Christ, and you the teachings of the warrior-ruler and Prophet, I am a defiler and an unbeliever. Tell me, Mohammed, *did* Christ, who was a healer and a helper rather than a learned scholar, ever teach His children anything of which the Prophet would have disapproved? I mean, were His guidances not all for beauty and truth and purity, just as much as the Prophet's?"

Mohammed hesitated. "His teachings were beautiful, madame," he said, "and they were divine, for they were inspired—he was one of the greatest of all the prophets—but he was *not* the Son of God. Christians believe that Christ said he was divine; *we* do not."

"But," I said, "He spoke metaphorically, just as He said He was Love, because love dwelt in Him, just as you

could say you are love because great love dwells in you. He said He was the Light, because the light dwelt in Him—so could we all if we would let the light in—and Truth, for the spirit of truth which He bestowed upon His people as His parting legacy was in Him also.”

“That is not how the orthodox Christians translate Christ’s words, madame. They believe he was divine because he was the very Son of God; they try to make the world believe that Christ Himself said he was divine. We Mussulmans know that he never did mean that, therefore we reverence the true Christ.”

“You are quite right, Mohammed, I am not orthodox; but when all the East speaks in metaphors, I can’t think why Christ’s beautiful metaphors were not understood better by His disciples. But apart from the subject of His divinity we are one at heart, and if you were excluded from Christian churches and all religious buildings and called ‘Mohammedan dogs,’ as we are called ‘Christian dogs,’ wouldn’t you be angry?”

“The Arab never cares what other nations think of him,” he said; “why do you care?”

* * * * *

Jack had left us, for after having seen me safe in Mohammed’s hands he felt free to go and do as he liked; curio-hunting does not appeal to his direct mind. “You have always to carry the things home in such dirty paper,” he said; “if you bought them in a decent shop, they would give you a clean piece.”

I told Mohammed that I wanted to go to the little square of the Bab-Menara, where they always have bits of old brass and iron and odds and ends of rubbish for sale on

the ground, for it is there you see "Kim" and his tattered companions at their very best.

"We can go through the bazaars to get to it," he said; "it is not far from the Kasba." And here let me tell you that I now know that the Kasba is a pretty wide term, for it is not only the ancient fortress built by Charles V., and to-day used for the French barracks, but a sort of citadel which includes the Dar-el-Bey (the town palace of the Bey) and lots of other official buildings besides.

Speaking of the Kasba also reminds me that I was quite right in supposing that the illuminations for the French fleet would not be anything like as good as the illuminations for the fête of the Prophet; the minimum of expense and trouble on the natives' part was all that they expended upon it—and who wonders?

Perhaps intentionally, perhaps not, we passed through the Souk-el-Attarin on our way to the Place Bab-Menara. I think purposely, for Mohammed's brown eyes were full of thought when I asked him to hold my umbrella so as to make a little shade, while I took a photo of my favourite spot, the Sadiki Hospital, with its gnarled and twisted vine which kindly sends its leafy branches right across the street to give shade to the poor bundles of human rags who squat on the ground behind its charitable door, waiting for admittance. The dark cypress-tree which soars up into the blue on the hospital side of the white-walled street is almost as high as the graceful minaret which dazzles the eye with its whiteness against the cloudless sky. Tunis is devoted to these slim cypress-trees, which contrast so impressively with the whiteness of their surroundings.

But to return to the Souk-el-Attarin, I couldn't help

smiling when I saw the dainty red kid shoes of la petite Belge sticking out from the seat on the right-hand side of Monsieur Ajeeb's shop and the green silk jebba of the ridiculous nigger disporting itself on the left—for as yet she has not ventured into the souks without her coloured escort.

"Oh, please to come here," she called out as I passed. "I have had such an interesting morning! I am learning Arabic."

"Are five languages not sufficient for you to flirt in?" I asked. "Have pity on the poor man."

"Oh—Monsieur Ajeeb, you mean? He can take good care of himself; these Moors are as calculating as they are devout."

Monsieur Ajeeb looked at me to see if I was a friend or a foe to the situation, and judging me to be the former, at once handed me a beautiful scarlet carnation, and taking down from a shelf a little bottle of perfume, he asked me to accept it. It was the essence of narcissi. La petite met his languorous eyes with an approving glance.

"He has paid you a great compliment," she said, "for among the virtuous flowers I have just learned that the narcissus is highly esteemed. 'Bread is the food of the body, narcissus is food for the soul'—is that not correct, Monsieur Ajeeb?"

"And what about your red rose?" I asked; "is it virtuous also?"

"The rose is most highly prized of all," she answered, "for it was made out of the drops of sweat which fell from the Prophet when he was taken up into heaven."

"Madame forgets nothing," the Moor said.

"*Mais oui*, except what I wish to," she said; "I am very stupid then."

"I have seen his wife this morning," I said to her in English; "she meets us to-morrow afternoon at the Bardo."

"He told me she was ill—in bed! Oh, but how he tells fibs!"

I laughed. "Tell him some in return," I said, "and keep him amused to-morrow afternoon; get him to accompany you and your husband to some hashish den. . . ."

We both laughed at the memory of that tragedy in hashish.

"*Mais non*, for he bores my husband, who cannot speak French; Jean is always bored."

"Then come yourself to the bazaar, but keep that piece of six-foot niggerhood in the green jebba with you—close to you; remember it is wiser."

"Mon Dieu, you may be sure I will! But Monsieur Ajeeb, he is so very funny, he makes me laugh—and I love to be gay—he teaches me the chess with such queer little pieces, not at all like our kings and queens and knights, just because the Mohammedan must not make, for any purpose at all, a form like a human being, for God made Monsieur Ajeeb after his own image." We both smiled at the blasphemy. "He wishes to hold my hand while he tells me which piece to move—and—ah, well! how the poor man wishes there was not that counter between us!"

An Arab boy passed at that moment carrying a water-melon, cut up in slices on a fine brass tray which was hung round his neck with a brass chain.

He stopped at Monsieur Ajeeb's shop. "Will you have some?" the Moor said, "it is very refreshing."

"Have fruits fine meanings as well as flowers? Do I do well to accept it, Monsieur Ajeeb?" asked la petite Belge.

"*Mais oui*, madame. The water-melon was one of the Prophet's two favourite fruits—the other was the date. He used to eat them together; of the date he said, 'Honour your paternal aunt, for she was created out of the earth of which Adam was formed'; and of the water-melon, 'Whoso eateth a mouthful of water-melon, God writeth for him a thousand good works, and cancelleth a thousand evil works and raiseth him a thousand degrees—for it cometh from Paradise.'"

La petite Belge held out her hand eagerly for a piece of the fruit. "Do please let me have many bites," she said, "so that I may have all my sins cancelled, for if one mouthful will cancel one thousand, I am not so very wicked but twenty bites will make me quite safe."

"Fancy eating of the fruit of your paternal aunt! I suppose dates, at that rate, must be your first cousins," I said.

"Which was the Prophet's favourite flower, Monsieur Ajeeb?" I asked; "it could not have been the rose, if it was only created when he ascended into heaven."

"The violet, madame," he said; "the excellence of the violet above all other extracts is as the excellence of the Prophet above the rest of creation; it is cold in summer and hot in winter—only the myrtle is the rival of the violet. Adam fell down from heaven with three things: 'the myrtle, which is the chief of the sweet-scented flowers of the world; an ear of wheat, which is

the chief of all kinds of food of the world ; and pressed dates, which are the chief of all fruits of the world.' ”

Having cancelled a thousand evil deeds, Mohammed and I passed on our way rejoicing and left la petite Belge to her studies of the various esteemed scents and fruits, and to the odour of oil of jessamine and attar of roses and the eloquence of Monsieur Ajeeb's eyes. As I go along I pop my head into everything that is open, or rather into everything that a Christian head may pop itself into in Tunis, and try to open everything that is shut.

For instance, if you weren't bold and didn't, quite uninvited, climb up a set of narrow stairs in between two hole-in-the-wall shops, you would never see one of the dear little Koran schools in the souks. There is a Koran school attached to every mosque. Whenever I hear a dolorous sound of chanting I know it is one of these mosque schools, where the boys learn to recite endless suras from the Koran by heart like so many parrots. The youthful scholars all sit cross-legged on the floor in a semi-circle round their theological master, in the true Moslem attitude of deep respect, their arms folded across their chests, their little hands hidden up their jebba sleeves, or under their burnouses, and their shoes placed neatly behind them.

Each little dark head is of course crowned by a scarlet fez with a black tassel.

At Kairowan there is a famous and very ancient college where nothing but the Koran is taught and studied, and where hundreds of learned men are employed to make copies of the inspired book in beautiful handwriting on fine parchment. The devout Mussulman despises modern print,

and poor though he may be he will save up his money to purchase from Kairowan one of these costly manuscript editions of the Koran.

Kairowan is the *holiest* town in North Africa, and to Mohammedans one of the four Gates of Paradise. It has, besides, the unique honour of containing the beard of the Prophet. Not so many years ago Kairowan was as strictly forbidden to the unbelievers as Mecca is to-day. But gradually and surely these forbidden cities are being laid bare to the world and open to Cook's tourists, and their inhabitants are being humbled to the dust. Each year the world holds one less mystery.

In that little distance between the perfumer's shop and the Place Bab-Menara we passed a whole Mohammedan encyclopædiaful of interesting things—things the inner meaning of which only now and again I grasp in the faintest measure. In the morning at this time the barbers' shops are always the centre of life, for the barbers' shops in the souks are not only "hairdressing and shaving saloons" but the popular clubs and favourite lounging-places of young elegants.

Ever since the days of *The Arabian Nights*, the barber has been a most important person in the social life of the people.

As the greater part of the elderly Moors and Arabs shave their heads as smooth as billiard balls, except for the little tuft on the top, it stands to reason that a good deal of their time is necessarily spent in the company of their shampooers.

At an Arab as well as at a Jewish wedding, the barber plays quite as important a part as he did in the days of

"the thousand and one." About ten A.M. is a good time to peep into a barber's shop if you wish to see it in full swing, and about an hour later you should visit the most popular Turkish bath. When a Moor or rich Arab has been shampooed and shaved and perfumed (by some slim, bare-legged, bare-armed, slender-fingered piece of brown humanity who sports a gold-embroidered and many-buttoned waistcoat, although his lower garments are so scanty that they don't show themselves below the Turkish towel which he wears fastened round his waist like a butcher's apron), and has carefully examined his fine person in the round wooden hand-glass bordered and backed with mother-of-pearl, he squats himself down on his feet cross-legged on the broad lounge with a well-padded back which runs all round the shop, and proceeds to help himself to a cigarette. A little table, well appointed with all sorts and conditions of Oriental temptations in tobacco, is placed conveniently near him. He next hails the flower-seller, who knows the hour of day when it is wise to occupy the seat outside the barber's door, and selects his favourite ear-flower. If you pass that same barber's shop two hours later, you will see the same elegant person seated in the same attitude, still smoking cigarettes, and daintily sniffing at one long-stemmed crimson carnation or at a nosegay of white jessamine. Truly time was made for traders and slaves, but not for this dilettante descendant of an Andalusian noble. To see him make a cigarette is an education in itself. He takes the little piece of paper with a pinch of tobacco, gives them one quick rub with the palm of his hand against the side of his leg, and—*voilà*, it is a perfectly finished cigarette!

But there are other sorts of barbers, just as there are other sorts and conditions of Moors, and the one that reminds me of "Kim" and his companion is the humblest of all—the skin-and-bone sunburnt Arab barber who travels from street to street and square to square, and who generally establishes himself on some shady spot in a poor and densely populated district.

There you will see him shaving the black head of some old nigger until it shines as though it had been polished with Nubian boot-blackening.

This perambulating barber's shop has no fine lounges or mother-of-pearl mirrors or scented cigarettes; it consists of an old piece of matting, two battered brass basins, and a couple of blunt razors. But the matting is not too old but what it must be respected—for both the barber and his customer take off their boots before stepping on it. Arabs are almost as careful to discard their shoes, if the wearing of them could give offence, as the Japanese. When you pause to look at these two emaciated Orientals swathed in brown rags, you cannot help saying to yourself: "Oh, devout ones! this shaving of the head (though as yet the reason of it is hidden from me) must bear some relation to your exacting creed. For what else would your hungry stomach sacrifice itself on the altar of cleanliness?" Surely dear to Allah are the shaven heads of his elders!

In the souk of the goldsmiths I saw an Arab woman (if you can call a bundle of white with a black patch for a face, a woman) come out of one of the finest shops followed by the Jew jeweller himself. He was carrying some article of feminine vanity in his hand; I couldn't see if it was a silver anklet, loaded with little bells, or a fine fibula brooch

decorated with bright enamels. They were going off to the Amin who presides over the jewellers' souk. This Amin would weigh the article and tell the intending purchaser the exact value of the metal, and then compel the jeweller to state before the woman the value he attached to its workmanship. Mohammed is a splendid companion, for he never forgets to tell me all these little incidents of everyday Arab life which are constantly taking place before one's very eyes in the souks. According to the Prophet, men are forbidden to wear any sort of gold or silver ornaments, or to clothe themselves in silk; I don't know if this explains the reason why so many of their really fine pieces of workmanship in the way of watch-chains and rings are made of white metal instead of silver. But I think the Prophet showed his excellent good taste and wisdom in one thing relating to personal vanity when he most *strictly* forbade Mohammedan women to dye their hair. Having had nine wives, he probably knew a good deal about the daughters of Eve.

Our way led us through the streets of the saddlers and leather merchants, and then I saw my first typical Arab horseman, a hero straight out of *The Arabian Nights*. I really cried out with the surprise and joy of seeing anything with my undreaming eyes so superbly picturesque and romantic!

O these Arab horsemen! How could any woman who was human resist such a figure, if he came wooing her in this knightly fashion? I never dreamt, dear, that this prosaic century could show me anywhere such mediæval dignity and absurd luxury; and yet he was just a piece of everyday Arab manhood.

He was piled up so high in his fine saddle that as he came riding through the narrow, dimly lit street he literally towered above the foot-passengers. His stirrups, which were as large as boots, looked as though they had come straight from some old goldsmith's shop in Bagdad, for they glittered with that fine tracery of gold and silver which one sees on the hilts of old swords. But Mohammed says this work is still done in Kairowan. The same tracery of silver and gold inlaid on iron covered the high front pommel and the back-rest of his saddle, which was made of wood and otherwise covered with red leather. This beautiful chair-saddle was set off with a richly embroidered and gold-fringed crimson velvet cloth. Gold and silver tassels and bands of red leather, mixed with embroidery in silk and silver, covered the beast's hindquarters and chest.

An Arab steed in its full war-paint and feathers is a sight for the gods. But the crowning piece of splendour was the rider's hat! For days I have longed to purchase one of these richly decorated baskets—which Mohammed has repeatedly assured me are not clothes-baskets, but hats!

"They may once have been hats, Mohammed," I said; "they may have been hats when all the world was young and loved dressing-up, or in the days of the Crusaders, but as hats their day is over."

"They are still hats, madame," he said; "this is the unchanging East."

They measure about three feet across from brim to brim and their crowns are about two feet in height, and they cost about three pounds. These relics of a glorious past are worn only by people of the interior or by horsemen who

are going a long way into the country. They create a breeze like a sail if there is a breath of wind, and of course they are a fine protection from the sun. It is just as well that they do belong to the country people, for two such pieces of headgear in one city—Jewish women's veiled towers and these clothes-baskets, decorated with appliqué leather leaves and rich embroidery of gold and silver—would be a little too much even for the Orient.

It is needless to say that this fine Arabian steed carried the hand of Fatima branded on his glossy thighs, and on his chest one of the little circular looking-glasses covered with red leather and bordered with tassels which you can buy in the saddlers' souks for one penny. They are the very best pennyworth I ever came across. Every Bedouin woman carries one. Mabruka wore the first I ever saw. They are like a biscuit of red leather bordered with bright tassels. A flap of leather lifts up, and in the glass underneath Mabruka can just see if her eyes are properly kohled, and if her pretty teeth and smiling mouth look the better for the lip-rouge she has applied before returning to her lord.

This fine horseman stopped at a saddler's in the souks, and examined from his exalted seat a red leather breast-band—for one of his humbler steeds, I suppose, for it was not embroidered with gold and silver mixed with Oriental greens and yellows. It was covered with little cowrie shells, which are a great protection against the evil eye, each one representing an eye in itself. When he had gone on his way, with that magnificent splendour and elegance which France is doing her best to drive out of Northern Africa, I asked myself the question—Will young Tunisia, who is daily

being weaned from the ancient customs of the Koran by the fascination and the excitement of the modern city, soon learn to scorn these fine horsemen, and with his hoarded wealth, which he is also fast learning to dissipate, purchase for himself a motor-car to carry him to his villa near Carthage? Has the death-knell been sounded for these Arabian knights on horseback?

To-day, alas! no camels come through the bazaars, and these horsemen are as rare as angels' visits.

But one comforts oneself with the fact that if young Tunisia is fast selling itself to the fleshpots of France, and now reads *Le Petit Journal* instead of the Mohammedan paper *Ech-Charg*, and drinks his absinthe and liqueurs in the "café chantant" every night, the real unchanging East can never die until Islam is no more. For wherever devout Mohammedans are, there must the ancient customs of the Koran be also. If Islam does not recognise nationality, it clasps the hand of brotherhood with all Mohammedans; Allah alone makes their nationality.

But to my curio-hunting. It was most disappointing. At first I thought I had drawn a blank, for there was nothing but filthy niggers, sitting on the ground surrounded by filthy pots and pans and broken kous-kous dishes, not at all curious. The square was so exposed to the heat and glare that I felt as though my eyes were being burnt out of my head with hot irons. I examined all the beggars and their worthless wares, and not a thing could I find until I spied an old Mameluke—with a basket on his back full of rubbish, and caught sight of a piece of bright Oriental colouring.

I signed to him to put the basket on the ground. He

deposited it at my feet in amazement. What could a wealthy unbeliever want with his poor wares?

But I did want one of his wares very much, for it was one of those old Eastern spice-boxes, which I have envied in the souks but which are not for sale. I pointed to it and said "Kadesh?" He was too surprised to speak.

Just for a joke I handed him three sous and pointed to the box. He took the money so eagerly as he handed me the box that I felt ashamed. Truly Allah had sent him a very mad customer. But an unbeliever's money would buy hobbs (bread) just as well as a Moslem's, so he went on his way rejoicing. I told Mohammed to take the box; I was afraid it might be very dirty inside. He opened its domed lid and invited me to smell; I did so cautiously, and oh! "Waft, waft, ye spicy breezes, and you, ye waters, roll!" How can I suggest to you the Easternness of that smell, which, for the first time, introduced itself into my Celtic system. I was so filled with joy that I wanted to go straight home and get the old Sicilian (who always tempts me to play leap-frog over her back) to clean it, but Mohammed said he would do it. The gold was too mellow and the greens and blues and reds too soft to be entrusted to her eager but ignorant care. My only other purchase was a beautiful iron buckle inlaid with silver and gold (like the horseman's stirrup), which an old Arab sitting under a big white umbrella exchanged with me for one penny. It was rusty and tarnished, but carbolic tooth-powder and patience have made it quite beautiful.

Mohammed insisted on my looking at the fine reservoirs and waterworks which are up in that part of the city, and which the French have given to Tunis—they have also,

perhaps you already know, restored the ancient cisterns at Carthage and put them into use—for ordinary water. This waterfall and reservoir of which I am speaking supply the city with pure drinking-water, a thing which of course it never had before, although it has always been the custom with the wealthy Arabs when dying to leave their money to supply the people with water in some form or other, as a rule for irrigating purposes. With the Arabs, as with the Persians, all developments in agricultural pursuits are marked down as good works—this speaks in itself for the character of the land.

And now may the Lord of Lords and the Causer of Causes permit you to remain unchanged until we meet, and always as devoted to your unworthy

DORIS.

CHAPTER IX

TUNIS, May 19—.

MY DEAREST,

The Bardo *is* beautiful and Jack is dreadfully in love—always, these two things will hang together in my mind. Rose-pink oleanders, a pile of Oriental buildings with one high white guarding tower, a profusion of green-shuttered windows, and Jack, with his honest eyes, gazing into a pair of violet ones just showing their sadness out of a black yashmak—this will be the confused jumble which the word “Bardo” will always call up in my mind.

Poor old Jack! I’m sadly afraid this is the *real thing*, and so please, dear, don’t blame me if I let “Alice’s boy,” as you used to call him, manage his own affairs, under the shadow of Allah, the great Causer of Causes. Kismet is too powerful, and as Jack truly says, there is only one person who has any right to ruin anyone’s life, and that is the person himself. Youth, as you know, would much rather mar his own future than let even his most loving parent make it for him. Your own damnation *may* sometimes be worth the candle (at any rate it is exciting), but the salvation offered to you by others is like a steerage ticket to the Colonies.

They have a pretty proverb here, which suits Jack’s state exactly:

“When the moon is with thee, of what account are the stars?”

And Jack’s moon is with him all the time, and he will

hear nothing of the stars, this wonderful southern moon, which was surely made for the harvesting of lovers !

Before I go into the details of what happened, I will tell you briefly the effect that this day at the Bardo has had upon Jack.

Well, if possible, he means to send Sylvia (for that is Madame Ajeeb's name) home to England and eventually marry her ! I can't tell you if *she* is in love with Jack ; I should imagine she is, for in her eyes he must seem a very hero of romance. So far Jack has not confided to me how he contemplates bringing about such a situation, but he seems very confident about the matter. What a wonderful kingdom Love is, dear ; I know Jack would take up his abode in it to-morrow, if he had to give up every worldly possession and live in a Bedouin tent with camels and Arab donkeys instead of his fine hunters and motors for his means of conveyance.

Of course I know nothing about this charming Sylvia, but I can easily see why all the swains adore her, for she is gentleness itself and wonderfully feminine.

And now I will return to the Bardo. The famous Staircase of the Lions is surely one of the staircases to Paradise, although it is guarded on each side by four white lions instead of angels.

I am really glad I have not yet seen Spain, for I suppose the Alhambra would have spoilt me for these Moorish buildings in Tunis. Not having seen the Alhambra I can still feel that the arabesqued stucco-work rooms and courts at the Bardo and in the Dar-el-Bey in Tunis, and this white Staircase of the Lions, are the most beautiful things the mind of man can imagine—for as Ruskin said about St

Mark's, "It is an *unimagined* beauty." If I had been spoilt by the Alhambra and Spain generally, no doubt my praise would have been more restrained.

For many years the Bardo was a dilapidated and abandoned palace. Now the Bey administers justice here on Saturday, at six A.M. Sentence is pronounced by him and carried out at once, with a bowstring, in the adjoining square.

The present Bey resides here. The former Bey did not, which is the reason, I suppose, why the present one does; for there is a strange etiquette in Tunis regarding the residence of the reigning Bey which necessitates his either building a new palace for himself or inhabiting one used by a former Bey, but on no account the one which has just been occupied. This is the explanation, I suppose, of the many Dar-el-Beys near Tunis.

Another point of etiquette is, or was before the days of the French occupation, that the heir-apparent should see as little as possible of the reigning Bey, and never live under the same roof with him. I imagine this custom has arisen from the Eastern fear of intrigue and treachery, for scarcely any Bey has ever died a natural death, and it is not very ancient history since the Beys of Tunis were eaten by their subjects. But before I begin my own disconnected ramblings about the palace, I will copy out a very concise little description that I read this evening of what this Bardo really is.

"The Bardo, or official abode of the Beys, is in reality a walled town, surrounded by ditches, about two miles from the Gates of Tunis. It has evidently existed there since Spanish times, for the name is clearly an adaptation of the

Spanish Pardo, a Royal domain just outside Madrid. The Bardo contains a bazaar, a mosque, and a Turkish bath—the three outward and visible signs of a Tunisian city, great or small—a hall of justice, two audience-chambers, a quadrangle known as the Court of the Lions,” etc.

But to-day is the day of small things for the Bey of Tunis, who is of so little importance to the world generally, and even to Tunis, that he is not worth eating. For twenty years no Bey of Tunis has ever spent a night in his capital, but before the French occupation they used the Dar-el-Bey, near the Kasba, as the official winter palace. That is why, I suppose, the richest Tunisians (who are mostly Mamelukes and Turks) have built their vulgar modern houses on the high ground of the Kasba, for the Mamelukes, who are mongrel Greeks and Syrians and are of slave origin, have always held the well-paid Government posts in Tunis, and squeezed the people so effectually that their riches are sure and lasting. They furnish their modern palaces with ill-chosen European luxuries, and delight in semi-European customs and costumes. They are said to possess all the worst traits of the Levantine Greeks and Armenians. For the welfare and prosperity of the people, French officialdom must be a happy exchange.

We took a tram to the Bab-Souika and then changed into the Bardo tram. The Bab-Souika itself is a dirty little flat Arab village, with scarce a house of more than one storey high, built of sand and plaster and of course completely whitewashed. As we had some little time to wait for our tram, I explored it more exhaustively than I did with Jack when we went to buy the pottery and the camels in the Rue Sidi-Mahrez. The shops and houses are mere

cupboards in the walls. Squalid is the one word which will describe these whitewashed hovels of humanity. Yet here and there the lowest and the poorest of them was graced with the presence of some venerable apostle or bearded patriarch, or some amazingly elegant youth who looked as if he was a hero out of *Lalla Rookh*.

In one hole-in-the-wall shop I saw a repulsive and hairy old nigger mending boots which in themselves were a tragedy; in the next a notary was seated cross-legged on the floor with his ink and paper and pens on the matting before him—he was patiently waiting for Allah to send him a client. When the client appears, like a Jap he will hold a piece of paper in his hand and with a fine paint-brush write a beautiful letter on it, for the sum of, alas! not six shillings and eightpence, but two or three sous. The next hole in the wall was an Arab eating-house with its dishes of steaming kous-kous and bread fried in oil ranged along the broad brick stove which formed the counter to the shop and its front wall. Until quite lately (and still in some instances) the Arabs jealously hid their food from the defiling eyes of unbelievers. But to-day an Arab woman invited me to taste the kous-kous which was cooking on one of these brick stoves while I waited for the tram. I did so, but it was poor man's kous-kous, and pathetically different from what Monsieur — sets before his guests at the hotel. These shops are typical of what one passes all along the hot white street which holds the tram lines—those terrible tokens of twentieth-century civilisation.

If Abraham descended into such a village to-morrow there would only be a very few things he would not understand; the electric trams, which go whistling past, and

the hideous clothes of the occasional European might shock his sense of repose and dignity, but he would probably take to them both just as kindly as the gentle, courteous Arab of to-day, who, though he changes not himself, is tolerant of the exuberant overflow of the Western world which pours into his city.

The farther the tram whisked us into the country the more Biblical our surroundings became. We saw lots of stately Arab horsemen, but never another so knightly as my "lord of the souks"; and here and there little Arab farms, if you can call one whitewashed square stone hut with a tall date-palm, and one supercilious idle camel, a farm. In a Scotsman's mind it would indeed be a "dry house."

But if these farms were dry in the literal sense of the word, sporting not one blade of grass or weed to break the sea of yellow sand that stretched out into the infinite, they were rich in shadows—deep purple shadows which lay on the sun-baked soil like lovely flowers. These shadows are the desert's flowers. As we bounded along in the tram our feelings rose to exultation. The sense of freedom and of space and, best of all, of simplicity was intoxicating. The azure sky, soaring date-palms, the lonely flat-roofed houses, so white against the yellow sand, and that infinity of slowly shifting purple shadows—think of it, dear; what must the true desert be? Even here, where one sees but the fringe of it, one realises the old saying that the camel is the ship that crosses the ocean of the desert, for truly the desert is the sea's twin sister.

I don't know if we bothered about getting tickets of admission to the Bardo Palace or not, but when we arrived at the entrance we just walked in, with no one to say us

may. My first delight was at the oleanders. Oh, these oleanders, their fragrance and their pinkness! How good it was at last to see them not in green wooden tubs, but growing as oleanders ought to grow—in a perfect ecstasy at their own beauty! The actual grounds round the palace are very ordinary—not at all what they might be if lavish irrigation was expended upon them.

But what one really comes to see at the Bardo are of course the famous Lions' Staircase and the beautiful *Cour d'Honneur* (which Jack found to be a veritable *cour d'amour*), the *Salle du Tribunal*, the *Salle des Graces*, the *Salle des Ministres*, the *Salle des Fêtes*, and, of course, the Carthaginian museum, which is amazingly interesting, especially the room of the jewels. But best of all is the Staircase of the Lions, with its exquisite double arcade and vestibule.

As I walked up the white marble steps I was terribly conscious that it was never meant for the brown boots of unbelievers, but for white-clad figures whose ankles made music as they walked. This mass of bewildering whiteness wanted the flashes of Oriental pinks and turquoise-blues and vivid greens and the romance of languorous eyes to complete its *tout ensemble*. But Jack did not seem to think so. It was apparently not too beautiful for his hobnailed boots to climb, for he hurried up totally regardless of the different expressions of the four lions on either side of him. One was roaring up into heaven like a dog in the silence of the night, the next was couching on its two fore-paws like the lion of Lucerne, and the third was sitting up to listen more intently to what his quick ear had caught when he was asleep; the fourth and last was keeping guard on a carved pedestal on the top step of

the staircase. "Please, Jack," I said, "do just give this staircase *one* look; it isn't the staircase leading to the tube railway, or the steps up to your club in Piccadilly. To me it is the finest thing we have seen in Tunis."

"Yes, it's jolly fine," he said, "but we ought to tell Mohammed to order some Arab dancing-girls to play about in that cool-looking vestibule."

I agreed with Jack that the human note was missing; but I have lost faith in these wonderful Arab beauties one reads of, with their tissue veils and richly embroidered trousers and willowy figures. The Arab likens the grace of his lady-love to the slender branch of a willow, just as English poets do—it seems the universal emblem of maiden grace—but she bears a more striking resemblance to a gourd.

The Bey no doubt does possess a few of these rare Arabian houris, but they are not represented on the post-cards of "la belle Arabe" which I ought in the Avenue de France. I saw no grand servants posted about the palace, and I looked in vain for the gleam of dark eyes between the slits of the high green-shuttered windows. Everything was as deserted as a cemetery.

You feel, as you look at the staircase and loggia, that never again in the world's history will there be the inspired builders of ancient days. Never again, of course, can there be another Tunis, for never again will there be another Carthage; and Tunis owes half her splendour and beauty to Carthage, just as Carthage in her great day owed her art and beauty to Greece and to the talents of other nations. There is scarcely a fine building in Tunis that is not enriched from that city of arrogant



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE LIONS' STAIRCASE AT THE BARDO

(To face p. 158)

splendour, scarcely a street or bazaar that is not full of antique columns and marbles taken from Carthaginian temples and buildings; and I for one am not sorry, for how much more beautiful they look (even if the Arab's love of whitewash has not spared their carvings) supporting the stilted arches within arches in the narrow streets of the souks, and ornamenting the doors of mosques, than lying like fallen knights on a museum floor.

As I stood in this loggia of loggias, under a delicate canopy of lace, mere plaster-work of mortal hands, but as beautiful and ethereal as a night sky of southern clearness arabesqued with its full complement of stars, I could not help wondering why the magician's wand of some millionaire did not raise such a dream-palace in California. He would have to rest content, of course, without these priceless pickings from Carthage which give the Palace of the Bardo its grace of association as well as form, but such a building would look quite at home in one of the old Spanish towns on the Pacific coast, surrounded by a wealth of semi-tropical vegetation and under that fierce sunlight. Architecture demands its proper atmosphere of vegetation and landscape, just as well as its human atmosphere. Imagine this beautiful child of the south in cold Scotland, with oaks and birches shedding their wet, dead leaves all around it! Here in Tunis it has the eternal green of the soaring palm and the flaming beauty of the oleander.

I can't tell you, dear, in what order the corridors and reception-rooms come, but I know that I liked the beautiful *Cour d'Honneur*, with its graceful columns and white stilted arches, next best to the Staircase of the Lions. Here, if I

remember right, the walls of the court were covered with Oriental tiles, all hand-painted in the minutest fashion. The whole palace is full of these priceless tiles. And how fond the Moors were of building arches within arches, and arches within the centre of elaborately decorated square portals. You get this idea carried out to perfection in the doors of the *Cour d'Honneur*.

The *Salle du Tribunal* is of course rich and impressive in a way, but, for an Arab tribunal, very *unoriental* and disappointing. Imagine a Roman basilica (church) with richly ornamented walls and perfectly proportioned arches and columns and a black-and-white inlaid marble floor, but instead of the high altar at the east end a hideous baroque throne which resembles an Empire draught-screen with a velvet seat in the centre.

The guide thought it superb! In his baroque mind, the columns from Carthage were not to be compared to it, so I perjured my soul for his sake. Jack said the throne looked as though it ought to be filled with sweets. The actual throne-room itself dances before my eyes as shockingly vulgar and shoddy. If this is Tunisian taste when it is let loose at the Grand Magasin du Louvre, or the Bon Marché, may the gods destroy the French before they allow them to influence Morocco as they have influenced Algeria and Tunisia. The Empire furniture, the appalling French carpet, the array of ormolu clocks which stand at even intervals on marble-topped baroque tables, and, worst of all, the throne itself! The only rich and splendid objects in the room are the great rock-crystal chandeliers and a portrait of Louis Philippe in superb Gobelin tapestry. This portrait forms one of the curious collection of

European crowned heads which decorate the walls of the throne-room. A charming portrait of Queen Victoria is given the place of honour on the right-hand side of the throne. All these portraits were presented by the various sovereigns of Europe to the Beys of Tunis. We had passed out of the *Salle des Ministres*—which in my memory has only two noticeable features, its glorious Oriental tiles and its shocking carpet—and were making our way through the *Salle des Receptions*, which is perfectly lovely in spite of its foolish mixture of modern baroque and Oriental splendour, when I saw an Arab woman sitting alone on the deep divan close to the ten-and-sixpenny throne of the “Carlo-Quinto” period under one of the four domes. Not far from this Bon Marché piece of chocolate-box baroque are four fine antique columns which are not a day younger than the first Carthage.

I had entirely forgotten the only thing that had been in poor Jack’s patient mind all day—the words Madame Ajeeb had spoken in the pottery shop at Bab-Souika: “Look for me at the Bardo to-morrow afternoon,” so the lonely white figure didn’t interest me particularly.

It rose and came towards us, however, as we approached the throne, a humbly dressed Arab woman with a haik, a sort of white burnous of the ordinary material, manufactured in Manchester for the poor Tunisians who cannot afford the expensive hand-woven fabrics. Her ankleted, white-stockinged feet were thrust as far as the insteps into sabot-like patent-leather shoes. With one very white hand which looked as though its finger-tips had been dipped in gamboge, she held the folds of her haik across her throat, so that the outline of even her neck should not be seen.

Our guide appeared not to notice her, and I thought she was perhaps some woman belonging to the Bey's household. An Arab woman's presence in an Arab palace did not seem to me very strange, so I continued my inspection of the lovely black-and-white arches and the finest of all the painted tiles we had yet seen. As I did so I couldn't help thinking to myself how curiously similar this room was in form—even to the beautiful pillared corners of the stilted arches which supported the cupolas—to that *inner* Arabo-Norman room in King Roger's palace at Palermo.

The discordant note in the room (for they all have their mark of the beast) is the Renaissance panelling which forms the dado below the glorious upper part of painted tiles.

Here the restorer, instead of being faithful to that vandal of all vandals, Carlo-Quinto, might have visited King Roger's chapel in Palermo and copied the never-to-be-forgotten dado of simple marble slabs, cipolino, verde antico and crimson porphyry, with its pagan border of the conventionalised figure of the goddess Tanit.

By the way, that Carthaginian goddess must have found herself surprisingly at home in that Norman chapel, where she was surrounded by the very columns and marbles which might have formed a part of her great temple at Carthage.

That queer little Phœnician figure, so like a Dutch doll in shape, which represents the great Tanit (the moon-goddess of the Carthaginians, in whom was merged the Phœnician Baal-Moloch or sun-god and the horned Astarte of the crescent moon) has found her way into strange places and strange lands.

Jack and Mohammed had fallen behind ; I had walked on

with my fat guide, who might, there is no saying, have looked impressive and dignified in his native dress, but in a badly made European uniform of blue he looked very like an English seaside bathing-man. Presently I looked behind, and to my surprise the Arab woman was walking now between Jack and Mohammed—not, I thought, with quite the native gait. Still the guide took no notice of her presence. All of a sudden I remembered Madame Ajeeb's words: "Look for me at the Bardo to-morrow afternoon."

As I have said before, surely the dress of the ordinary Arab woman was invented for the furtherance of intrigues, for not even her own husband would have guessed that this shapeless bundle of white, slipping along in clanking anklets and patent-leather heelless slippers, was one and the same person as the dainty figure who sat on the outside seat of the perfumer's shop in the souk. Soon after this (as far as my memory carries me) we passed into the *Salle des Glaces*, which sounds like the room of the ice-creams; but it is not, but how to tell you what it really is I don't know.

Here some more than usually imaginative Oriental mind conceived the idea of carrying out the fine Moorish stucco mashrabeyah work in crystal and gold.

The crystal is the background and the gold the delicate arabesquing. It is so cunningly designed that the dull crystal looks very far off, for the gold stands right out from it. Please don't picture to yourself a bizarre effect suited to the Trocadero, but a mellowed dream of sunset. It is just like the lid of some exquisite jewel-box made of crystal and gold, and yet it covers all the roof and cornice of the

vast hall. But here the good taste of this *Salle des Glaces* ends; the mark of the beast is over all the rest.

I sat down on one of the linen-covered sofas and kept my eyes upwards above the offending baroque dado and thought to myself this is the sort of decoration that the mad King of Bavaria might have ordered for the salon in which he used to sit and watch the thousand crystal chandeliers being let up and down from the roof to the floor by some unseen hand in the dead of the night. There are four superb rock-crystal chandeliers hung from this roof of rare Eastern beauty.

I had not been seated many minutes before Madame Ajeeb sat down by my side.

I turned to her and smiled, but there was silence between us for a moment; I really didn't know what to say to her, or just what my true feelings were about her in connection with Jack.

"You think I should not have come?" she said. "Are you vexed?"

"No, please don't think so; but—is it wise? I should never forgive myself if I got you into serious trouble with your husband."

"I am in serious trouble," she said; "he has been so very cruel—oh, you don't know how cruel! You must never know the manner in which these Moors can insult and degrade their women!"

"You poor dear!" I said; "I thought he left you alone."

"He did," she said, "but now he does all he can (and that is more than any Englishwoman can imagine) to insult me." Her voice faltered. "I must kill myself; indeed I can't live and bear it!"

"I suppose you shouldn't say that," I said, "although for myself I never could see that it is better to live a life which must degrade one than to end it. But now that you have managed to come out alone, can you not get away altogether?"

"I am without one sou," she said bitterly. "And I am not alone. Outside the palace gate, at the only exit, the Arab woman you saw with me yesterday is waiting for me; she is a kind creature, but not so fond of me as she is faithful to Monsieur Ajeeb's money."

"Is she not surprised at your wearing native dress? Are you trusted even *so far* alone?" I asked.

"No, it is nothing new to her; I have often worn it before. At first when I came to Tunis it was not pleasant to be criticised and spoken about wherever I went, so except when I was with Monsieur Ajeeb" (I noticed that she never used the word "husband") "I used to wear native dress, especially when I visited the Arab quarters of the city or went out with my servants."

"And Monsieur Ajeeb allows you no money?"

"Not a farthing," she said; "I have written twice to my only relative, who would if she could send me some money; but if she ever answered the letters I have not received it."

"Madame Ajeeb," I said, "as far as money is concerned I will help you, but have you ever applied to your consul? Couldn't he do something to make Monsieur Ajeeb at least treat you decently?"

She gave a shivering laugh. "France has to tread so very gently in Tunis," she said, "that she would look upon it as an act of unfriendliness on England's part if

the English consul interfered with the sacred life of the Arabs. Their home life is so sacred, you must know, that all divorces and domestic quarrels come before the *cadi* who rules over the ecclesiastical court."

"In the East, 'sacred' has a strange meaning," I said.

Jack, who had been looking out at one of the windows on the other side of the room, came and broke in upon our conversation just then.

He had carried off the guide so that he should not see how earnestly Madame Ajeeb was speaking to me. The man, it appears, had been told by Madame Ajeeb's servant who she was, and also warned, I suppose, to keep his eyes on her without appearing to notice her; and some francs out of Jack's well-lined pockets no doubt found their way into his whilst they stood over in the shadow of the window.

"Doris," Jack said—he was standing in front of me, and his eyes were filled with entreaty—"you will help us, won't you?"

The "us" was significant.

"How can I help Madame Ajeeb?" I asked; "I have asked her if she will accept any money she requires." Jack interrupted me, and his expression showed that he had noticed that I had very pointedly said, "Madame Ajeeb" and ignored the "us."

"Her husband wishes her to live in his villa at Gafsa."

"Gafsa?" I said inquiringly; "where is Gafsa?"

"Oh, Gafsa," Jack said, just as if he had known it all his life, "is in the south of the Regency—a purely Oriental place."

I turned to madame.

"Monsieur Ajeeb does a little trade with rose-growers.



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

OASIS IN THE TUNISIAN SAHARA

Gafsa is famous for its flowers; the Oasis has a garden industry for perfumery."

"Would it be worse than Tunis?" I said. "It sounds fascinating in a way; would *he* go too?"

"Imagine how you would feel," Jack said hastily, "if you were sent to live all alone in a Mohammedan city where they take no pains to hide their dislike of foreigners, and to feel that you were entirely at the mercy of a man who finds his chief pleasure in ill-treating you."

"Why does he wish you to go?" I asked.

She gave a weary sigh. "He gave no reason, and a wife must not presume to ask for one or question the wishes of her master."

"You shan't go," Jack said—"not while I'm alive, anyhow."

"You are so kind and sympathetic," she said, "but how can you or anyone prevent it? So long as I am his wife he has a right to send me where he likes within reason. It is growing hot for Tunis."

"Monsieur Ajeeb is pressed for money."

"Is he?" she said. "I hear nothing of his affairs. I know that sometimes he pays large sums for the rings and jewels which he only permits me to wear in his presence, and he buys many horses, but he never tells me anything."

"How do *you* know, Jack?" I asked.

"What the Jews in the bazaars don't know isn't worth knowing," he said; "didn't you tell me yourself that the souks have ears?"

I don't know why, but the words of the old Arab fortune-teller came into my mind at the moment—"She came to you for money; you will part with her for money."

Madame Ajeeb touched my arm with her henna-stained fingers.

"Please implore your friend not to do anything rash for my sake; I am not worth it. Will you make him leave Tunis and forget me?"

I did not know what to say, those eyes were so eloquently tragic, that hand so pathetically thin.

"Neither of us will ever forget you," I said; "that is impossible, and I believe we shall find some way to help you."

I caught Mohammed's eyes. He came towards me. "May I speak to you," he said, "and advise you to say good-bye to Madame Ajeeb? Her servant is in the next apartment; she has come to look for her."

Madame rose quickly. "Good-bye," she said; "it helps me to feel that I have two friends in the city."

Mohammed went with her as far as the door which opened into the next apartment. What passed between them I shall never know, but I saw Mohammed put his hand in his pocket, and I have an idea that the dear man gave her some money in case she should need it for a bribe, and then he returned to us, his thin face expressive of absolutely nothing.

After that Jack and I did the museum, which contains a room full of beautiful Carthaginian jewellery and antique glass and coins—all amazingly interesting to anyone who has seen just their doubles in Sicily and Greece as we have, for the Carthaginians had nothing of their own but money. I think they must have been rather vulgar people, avaricious, purse-proud and unimaginative.

On the way back from the Bardo we saw some

snake-charmers, but I will tell you about them in my next letter.

The days are getting much hotter, but there is always a lovely cool breeze in the afternoon.

La petite Belge and her husband are to dine with me to-morrow night.

Yours devotedly,

DORIS.

CHAPTER X

TUNIS, *May 19—*.

DEAREST,

To-day has been a day of smaller things, but of infinite variety.

I feel as though I were gradually learning to read the East with Mohammed as my dictionary, but as you can imagine, I have to look up every other word. In these days, when everything above one is an unbroken infinity of blue and everything around is even whiter than snow, Tunis is stamping itself on my brain for ever.

It is delightful to do nothing more serious in the way of sightseeing than to sit about cafés (the open-air cafés, of course, for those in the souks are too stuffy) and watch the East, like the sacred Ganges, flowing by.

Cafés in Tunis are generally grouped round mosques, just as tea-houses are grouped round temples in Japan.

But Mohammedans are never merry like the Japanese. They are always grown up. Even as infants they look as sage and dignified as Buddhas, whereas a Japanese, however old he may be, always retains his child's heart.

We experiment on every sort and condition of café in every sort and condition of street and place, and yet our bill at the end of the day would not pay for one tea at a shilling tea-shop in London.

A cup of coffee without a saucer is a halfpenny, and coffee with a saucer is a penny. Think of how it would add to the expense of a supper at the Carlton Hotel in

London if they charged for the use of all the dishes as well ! Being lordly Europeans we scorned expense, and always ordered saucers as well as cups ! There is never anything to eat at these cafés, for the Arab sniffs a carnation instead of chewing a muffin, so a flower-seller is generally hanging about, seeking whom he can persuade ; also a Turk who sells delicious burnt almonds in white-paper packets on a bright brass tray (twenty for one penny, and much better than Fuller's). At other hours he sells his wares to the *bonnes* and French children who take their perambulation under the trees of the Avenue de France.

There is a good Arab café in the Place Halfaouine and a café Larouissi at the corner of the Sidi-el-Aloui, a Moorish café at the Bab-Djedid, and a universal one at the Place Sidi Baian near the Rue Sidi Baian, where fat Jewesses delight the natives with their dancing.

These are the most typical cafés, where one sees the distinct characteristics of the different Tunisian races, but there are hundreds of others for you to patronise. Then there are the familiar Sicilian cafés. The one just inside the Porte de France is very popular with the merchants of the souks, who find it handy ; here also Jewesses dance every night. Arab cafés consist of nothing but some chairs and a few tables, under some trees if possible, for the Tunisians love the shade. I imagine that the man who has his house close to some trees and near a mosque generally converts it into a café ; for the Moslem likes to sit at his café until a white figure on the minaret overhead calls him to prayer. But before I tell you about our afternoon entertainments, I must not forget that I have not told you of our morning at the Dar-el-Bey.

I wanted to compare that palace with the Bardo while the latter was still fresh in my memory; so we "did" it after breakfast.

The black-and-white courtyard of the Dar-el-Bey is even more beautiful than the *Cour d'Honneur* at the Bardo. It carries you straight back to Lombard Italy; only here the arches are of course stilted, and the windows in the walls of the cloisters are filled in with delicate arabesqued plaster-work, and so are the roofs. Some of the rooms in the palace itself are gems of Eastern architecture. The Dar-el-Bey has suffered less at the hands of restorers than the Bardo.

The old roofs of gesso-work are incomparably lovely with their delicate stalactites. We sat a long time in one anteroom that opened out into the balcony which ran round the courtyard of the *piano nobile*, as the Sicilians call it. One realises in studying the geography of these Arab palaces how very very strongly Sicilian domestic architecture was influenced by the East. The Arab's patio is the Sicilian cortile. The windowless exteriors and the broad vaulted porch with its porter's lodge near the street, where business can be transacted without the stranger entering on the privacy of the house itself or even viewing the inner patio, are features of most Sicilian palaces. The *piano nobile* in Sicily is just the same as the women's quarter in an Arab house, one of the chief differences being, however, that in a Sicilian palace almost all the rooms open into each other, though of course the communicating door can be shut and each room can be entered by a separate door, which opens on to the corridor at the other side. In an Arab house each set of rooms is self-contained. Still,



Photo Garrigue, Tunis

THE PATIO OF THE BEY'S PALACE (DAR-EL-BEY) AT TUNIS

the similarity is very significant. The Palermitan nobles have plenty of Arab blood in their blue veins, and plenty of Arab feeling about their women.

There is a small museum at the Dar-el-Bey, but it contains little of first-class importance. Here, as well as at the Bardo, there are texts from the Koran over doors and on the walls. Texts from the Koran are more decorative than texts from the Bible; they make fine splashes of colour.

The court of justice where the Bey pronounces sentence on all sorts of criminals every Monday and Thursday is not an imposing room. During his illness I do not know who has been appointed his deputy, but I always meet bands of tattered and manacled prisoners, mere dregs of Oriental humanity, being conducted by members of the Bey's guard from the Dar-el-Bey to the Bey's prison in the souks on Mondays and Thursdays. The prison door always stands wide open, but it is guarded by two soldiers with bayonets.

In the prison it is horrible to see these wretched creatures pushing their hands and open mouths through the thick bars of their cells. As we passed up the wide passage, which had cells on each side of it, there was a general outcry of "Hobbs, hobbs!" ("Bread, bread!"). Mohammed told me that the prisoners depend entirely on the generosity of the public and of their relatives for their food. The State does not support them. Their general appearance, I thought, spoke well for Mohammedan charity, for they all looked more fiendish than starving. And here I must say a word in favour of the Jews. They are (in Tunis) most liberal to the poor; even the Mohammedans, who hate

them, admit that their charity is so great that it covers a multitude of sins.

We bought some bread, and the guard distributed it amongst the various occupants of the cells. It was just like feeding the beasts at the Zoo. Those who were waiting clamoured and shook the bars of their cages and leapt about with frantic greed. Some of them begged for tobacco, a luxury we thought unnecessary for thieves.

The view from the windows of the Dar-el-Bey is one of the finest in Tunis. It is from this point that you can best understand why the city was called "The Burnous of the Prophet." The Kasba (and citadel generally) is the hood of the burnous, which folds itself out towards the port and La Goulette.

How strangely Eastern the city looks from a height. I love the big white mother-domes of the mosques with their little ones like children circling round them. They look domestic and complacent, just like a comfy broody fowl with her chicks under her wings, or, as Lapie more picturesquely puts it, the centre dome is like a star with its satellites revolving round it.

The minarets are tall white lilies, as fair in the sunlight as Giotto's campanile at Florence.

How well suited to the intense East are the beetle-green tiles which cover the domes of the saints' tombs and the centre domes of the mosques which contain the ashes of a saint! "Holy, holy, holy," you say to yourself as you turn your eyes with a searchlight swiftness over the whole surface of the white 'Burnous,' "what a saintly city is Tunis!" "From this splendid height you can see the secrecy of an Oriental city. Scarcely a window points

outwards, and almost every chisel-cut of architecture except what is on the minarets is reserved for the jealously guarded interior." The streets are so narrow that you cannot see them; and the shops, which are mere holes in the walls, can be completely hidden at night by letting down a wooden shutter which is secured with an iron cross-bar. And the people themselves—how they glide and slip along enveloped in their white cloaks, the lines of their figures unbroken from the points of their high hoods or turbans to their white-stockinged ankles!

I looked down upon a big crowd the other day which had assembled to hear a story-teller, and all that I could see was a mass of white turbans and the tops of red fezes, and the broad backs of white-robed figures. Scarcely a pair of legs broke the flowing lines of these stately Moslems. The scene was so Biblical in aspect that I said to myself: "This is just how the crowds must have looked who followed Christ and listened to His preaching during His mission round the Sea of Galilee." I could picture to myself the mighty scorn on the faces of many of the listeners, that magnificent scorn of the human camel which you have to go to the East to understand fully. Theirs was the scorn of learned theologians for the daring and uneducated young Reformer who thought to change the unchanging East.

It is strange that it was an Eastern mind, a mind amazingly socialistic for its day, that conceived the religion best suited to the Western world.

Its simplicity, which made it the scorn of the Eastern theologians and learned scholars, was the very reason of its extraordinary growth in the West, where minds are

less metaphysical, and untutored in argument. You must think it very strange that I tell you so little about the Jews in my letters—the reason is that I find it difficult to be interested in them.

With their usual adaptability, they have taken to themselves almost every Arab custom and habit except those connected with religion. I am going to see them, however, in all their Saturday glory in the village of El Ariana.

In Tunis there are three Sundays!—the Mohammedans' "Jour de mosque," as Mohammed calls Friday; the Jewish Sabbath, which is Saturday, and the Catholic Sunday, which is our Sunday and keeps our weeks straight. I have walked through the Jewish quarter of the city many times. It differs from the Arab quarter scarcely at all, except that there are no mosques and that the fat women who hang about the patios are unveiled and less modest generally.

The Tunisian synagogues are very poor affairs, without any attempt at architecture. But I think I will give you a Jewish letter, and tell you a few things which are peculiar to Tunisian Jews. At present the things uppermost in my mind are not Jews, but snake-charmers, fondouks, and the holy man who took his evening coffee with us in the café near the mosque Halfaouine. And also I can't forget all that la petite Belge told me about Monsieur Ajeeb, for *she* came with us to the café, and what capital sport she is, as Jack says; and somehow, wherever she goes, the spirit of romance follows her.

I told you that she had promised to dine with me at my hotel. Well, she did so, and her presence in the *salle-d-manger* proved a fine test for the excellent manners and

good breeding of the French officers. For honestly, when *la petite Belge* is amused, her dimples would provoke the blessed St Louis himself. During dinner she was very much amused by the grave manners and the dignified behaviour of a fine white poodle, all shaven and shorn, that always has a place at table reserved for him beside his six-foot-three master, a captain in the *Chasseurs d'Afrique*, whose waist is far smaller than *la Belge's* own in his absurd little black jacket. The white poodle, which sits with its chin and long moustache just resting on the edge of the table, thinks itself one of the most important French residents in Tunis. Its place was almost opposite *la Belge's*, and to her sense of humour this dog in its well-cut white uniform, imitating the splendid dignity and elegance of its master, was irresistibly funny.

Besides, during dinner we had very exciting magic-lantern views thrown on to a huge white sheet which was erected just over the *Porte de France*; some of the views were quite funny. How these dear men kept their official gravity I can't imagine, for *la petite Belge's* laugh is most infectious. The Angry Saxon had a bad time of it, poor man, for she teased him most unmercifully about the hashish and declared that she will elope with Monsieur Ajeeb if he, her husband, doesn't learn to pay her pretty compliments. "Monsieur Ajeeb can say charming things all day long and never once repeat himself," she said; "and you cannot even tell me that my new spangled gauze scarf is becoming."

"You know it is," he said, "so why should I tell you; women are so fond of talking."

He became almost cheerful, however, over the excellence

of the kous-kous. "Little wonder," he said, "that the Arabs never have more than two dishes for their evening meal, if kous-kous is one of them."

Well, *that* was the dinner; and now for the café, the fondouks and the snake-charmer.

Fondouks, let me tell you, are the inns where camels pass the night when they come into Tunis from a distance with country produce. They are perhaps the most Eastern things in Tunis, and now to be found only in the oldest parts of the city. You may peep into these fondouks many mornings in the week and find nothing but a deserted courtyard with a very ancient arcade running round it. The stalls for the camels are under the divisions of the arches, which are often supported by lovely Carthaginian columns. But if you chance to visit them on market days you will find every fondouk full of camels, and here and there some fine Arab donkeys. Camels are peculiar beasts, even about taking their rest. They don't use their stalls to lie in as our beasts do—they kneel just outside them with their heads all pointing towards the centre of the courtyard and their high hindquarters well sheltered by the roof of the arcade. I never yet saw a camel standing or kneeling inside its stall.

Some of them have huge covers of matting, which look like inverted baskets, over their precious humps; others have nothing but dirt—dirt which has matted itself on to their fur, which looks as though it had been moth-eaten for centuries.

One knows a sick chicken in a farmyard at once because it can't keep its feathers clean. If this same rule applied to camels there must be many a sick one in these fondouks

in Tunis. Some of them were of course perfectly clean and respectable, the essence of aristocratic supercilious indifference, and some had dear little babies by their sides—camelets, I wonder if one might call them. By the way, dear, what is the correct term for a baby camel?

There is one thing for which we have to thank the Prophet, and that is that he taught his people to be kind to animals. His love for his favourite camel "Al Kaswa" and her extraordinary wisdom are of course well known to those who have been in the land of camels. Lane says that many mosques in Egypt, and in the Mohammedan East generally, have funds belonging to them which are specially devoted to the relief and support of animals.

Poor-looking Arabs as thin as spilikins guard these fondouks from under the arched entrances. When I enter one, two tattered bundles of brown and white unfold themselves and rise from the long stone benches at the door.

Always courteous, always gentle, always dignified, these slim bronzed figures defy poverty. Their only garment is a frayed and patched, brown-and-white-striped jebba with a hood, but their smiles, like Achmet's, raise them far above a mere modern like myself. Poverty has no terror or depraving effect on a people whose wants are of the simplest and whose luxuries are the merest necessities of life. If we only could remember, dear, that it is our wants that make us poor, and that in the vulgarest countries we want the most!

Delicate-featured Arabs and half-caste Berbers with their strange grey skins, Sudanese as black as coal with tremendous black lips and spreading nostrils (all far

poorer than London sparrows), sit huddled up on the edge of the kerbstone of the busy squares, waiting for a sou to fall into their lap from the rich man's purse. Then to Allah be the praise, for the instigation was His! But amongst all these followers of Islam, not one drunken or wine-sodden face will you see, not one skin filthy with alcoholic spots. Hashish may have its evils, but it does not have its pimples.

Nor are Arabs ever noisy or vulgar, at least in the stranger's eyes, in their moments of excitement.

Perhaps if I lived in the desert, and walked with my big brothers the camels, as St Francis would say, all day long, I too might gradually assume their calm and scorn.

How any living thing manages to look so affected and at the same time so much the *grande dame* as the camel, I can't imagine. How she must have been detested in the Ark!

In these fondouks, black asses and mules are permitted to lie down with the camels, just as they do outside the Bedouins' tents. This month of May seems to be the time of young things, for I have seen endless baby asses and baby camels. Baby asses are such dear leggy pieces of black foolishness!

And now I will exchange fondouks for snake-charmers. In the centre of the Place Halfaouine, which is no longer an Oriental square, for it has a very European-looking fountain in its centre and a row of very boulevardish trees and stone seats down each side, there was an immense crowd gathered. The end of the square is quite taken up with the mosque Halfaouine, which is not very mosquish either in its outward seeming, for instead of having small domes

circling round one mother dome, as they so often do, they are distributed all over the building and are not noticeable from the street, and the minaret is more like a factory chimney than anything else in Tunis.

La petite Belge was a little timid at first about pushing her way through the dense crowd. It certainly was enough to make one pause on the outside where most of the towering turbaned elders stood. Slim youths in their pale greens and mauves and flesh-tints formed the next row, while schoolboys and little children were allowed the front places.

The ordinary Arab schoolboy is such a dear thing, he is always so delightfully clean and dark-eyed! He wears voluminous white linen trousers and a full white shirt, which is held in place by a bright red sash of the same shade of scarlet as the ubiquitous fez which sets off his black hair and fine head.

A Tunisian crowd, like a Sicilian one, is invariably polite to strangers, so la Belge and I soon found ourselves classed with the children and allowed to stand in the front row. We were of course the only women in the crowd, but we generally are the only women in any place in Tunis unless it is in the noisy Sicilian quarter of the city or in the little Paris outside the Gate of the Orient.

I had pulled la Belge along with me. "Come, they are snake-charmers," I said; "now aren't you glad you were brave?"—she has never ceased to regret that she was not with us the day the fortune-teller made the geometrical signs in the sand.

"Oh, look at that long green snake," she said excitedly, "it is wound round and round the head of the middle man in the orchestra, like a rope-turban!"

The orchestra, which sat on either side of the "black magic man" who had the snake wound round his head, was simply lovely—I wish you could have seen it! Some of the members wore dark, rough brown cloaks (not burnouses) over long white under-garments, and others grey cloaks, and instead of turbans their dark heads were tied up in white towels, like nightcaps, which reached to their eyebrows. Their instruments consisted of large drums like grain-sieves with parchment bottoms and long, painted bamboo whistles, exactly the same as you see in the hands of musicians on ancient Greek or Egyptian vases, decorated with signs to keep off the evil eye. They were certainly making the most of the instruments in the matter of mere sound and weirdness; they were, I suppose, trying to rouse the passions of the snakes.

Presently the charmer who had his head encircled with a fine cobra stepped, with a great air of mystery, out on to the matting where all the other snakes were lying, just showing their noses from the mouths of strange-looking bags. I never saw a man move with such panther-like stealth and agility. One after another he lifted the ugly brutes out of their bags and held them up to the full view of the audience; then he put them all back again, and commenced exhorting his admiring audience in the name of Allah to contribute towards the entertainment. As he stalked backwards and forwards on the matting he lifted up his feet very high, as though he were walking in water.

His eloquence was as wonderful as his grace, and his feline suppleness of limb was uncanny. Now and then someone from the back of the audience threw a sou on

to the matting, which he picked up slowly, but did not condescend to acknowledge. The snake which had been tied round his head he now unwound and tied it round his long bare neck like a scarf.

To stop the flow of eloquence which introduced the name of Allah at each fresh intaking of his breath, someone in the audience cried out that one of the snakes was escaping and making its way through the feet of the audience. There was a general movement backwards on the part of the onlookers, but without ceasing his invocation to the Almighty the magician stepped stealthily towards the snake and picked it up and held it at brown arm's-length high up in the air. He opened his mouth very wide, and gradually lowered the snake until its spade-shaped head was well down his throat; then his white teeth closed on its nostrils.

The crowd were very pleased at this, but I should have thought more of it if he had bitten the beast's head off. After kissing its cold lips he threw it unhurt on the matting, and motioned to the orchestra to commence its barbaric twanging and pipe-blowing again. One little boy in the orchestra took my fancy; he looked like a child dervish in his big beef-pudding hat of grey felt and his stiff grey felt cloak, his poor little face deathly pale, his black eyes fanatically bright. Some of the snakes had crawled like moist lava out of the bags; they were loathsomely fat and hideous.

But la Belge was growing impatient. "Surely he can charm them more than that!" she said; "I expected to see them dance at least, and perhaps sing or say their prayers, but he only keeps on tying them round his neck

and biting their noses or kissing them; that is not very amusing, I think."

"Not very much for Africa," I said. "I thought he would hypnotise them into doing all sorts of uncanny things, but so far as what the actual *snakes* do, I have seen better exhibitions of their powers at Earl's Court with a Hindoo charmer and a mongoose."

"I think he is a great fraud," she said, "not at all worth more than two sous. But why do these grave people think it so interesting? Perhaps, after all, the snakes will attack him; there is always the chance, I suppose, so that is why they wait."

"I don't believe it," I said. "I think the poor beasts have all lost their poison-teeth long ago, like the aged cobra in Kipling's jungle story. Do you remember how sorry one felt for him?"

"No," she said, "Keeping-el-ing I do not know. I never read English books, they do not amuse me. . . . In England I find you are not so very particular about what you may do or say as about what you may read—do you not agree?"

We both laughed.

"But this is going on for ever," I said. "I suppose it is like a Punch and Judy show—unless the audience contributes a certain amount, Punch will not punch. I will ask Mohammed how much the magician wants to make the snakes do their utmost."

La Belge offered to throw two francs on the matting if only something would happen. "It is too much, madame," Mohammed said. "He will do nothing more; this is all that ever happens, but the snakes are really worth

looking at, for they are rare and extremely deadly. These men all come from the interior."

"Look," *la petite Belge* said, "now one gets angry; it is raising itself up into a hoop on the ground and throwing out its hood. How dreadfully wicked it looks! See, there it goes off amongst the crowd!"

But in an instant the crowd had loosened and flung itself back and the snake was captured. The magician stood with the huge beast held up to view. What he did to it I don't know, but the next moment its wriggling body became perfectly still and apparently lifeless; then with superb dignity he kissed it and flung it across the matting and turned his attention to the other beasts, which were making their way out of their bags.

But our patience and appetite for charmers were abating. The sun had been beating down upon us with all the fierceness of an African May at the hottest hour of the day, so after again throwing down some coppers on the matting, which Mohammed said were a very liberal contribution to this ancient art of black magic, we stepped out of the crowd and strolled off to the *café*.

That magic-man with his weird orchestra and skin bags full of snakes did not do anything very wonderful, I must admit, but he was another of the boy "Kim's" companions, and somehow the very silence and mystery of the desert seemed still to surround him. His lean grace, his slow stealthy movements, his exquisitely chiselled features, the far-off look in his eyes—which may or may not have been a part of his actor's business, I cannot say—and his monotonous and harmonious invocations still ring in my ears. Dear desert man, how I would love to see you with

your matting spread on a wandering sea of yellow sand, surrounded by an audience of your own people! City Arabs are, after all, scarcely the real thing, charming as they are.

Truly those who go down to the sea in ships see the wonders of the deep, and those who cross the desert on camels learn the mystery of the East.

For mystery and simplicity are twin brethren, like the sea and the desert, almost inseparable from one another. For is anything, I ask you, more simple or more mysterious than a baby? And when one meets that very rare thing, a perfectly simple man or woman, what a halo of mystery they wear for us!

So difficult is it to be perfectly simple, that great learning is far less rare. When we reached the café we seated ourselves at a table in the centre of a crowd of comfortable-looking Orientals, all of the well-to-do class, who were either smoking or drinking coffee or playing chess or *doing nothing*—which, after all, is the Arab's most popular form of amusement—under the trees near the mosque at the end of the square.

La petite Belge was telling me about Monsieur Ajeeb and his unceasing admiration for herself. She takes it all as a huge joke. He has gone so far as to implore her to come to his shop *without* her nigger chaperon and let him drive her out to the Belvedere this evening, where he will show her the most splendid view of Tunis and the really beautiful casino. He has also invited her to visit his house when his wife has gone to the country!

"If I liked," she said, "I think I could get Madame Ajeeb her freedom very soon."

"You?" I said; "how could you manage it?"

"He is tired of her," she said, "and now begins to grudge the money he spends upon her. She is childless; that is a sufficient reason for a divorce."

"But what can *you* do to hasten matters? . . . He still enjoys making her miserable, apparently."

"If I hinted that your friend met the lovely Sylvia?"

I stopped her. "How do you know he has met her alone?"

She gave a little laugh. "You are so very simple; he met her last night at prayer-hour. I do not know where, but Mohammed does. If I told Monsieur Ajeeb that his wife met one of her own countrymen alone, and at the same time I allowed him to hope . . ." She paused. "If I gave him—how shall I say it?—just a little encouragement, he would get rid of her."

"But how could you dare to give him hope," I said, "when you know you do not mean anything?"

"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, of course—not *anything*! But it might be well to let *him* mean something, and to let him also believe that *I* mean something; then Madame Ajeeb would stand before the *cadi*, *et voila tout*—she would be free! . . . and your poor friend over there, who has grown so grave and almost as sober as Jean, he would be happy!"

I could not help laughing at the daring of her plan.

"Can you play the game?" I said. "What about your husband? And remember, it is not always safe to trifle with Orientals."

"*Tant mieux*," she said; "if the game held no dangers, it would hold no fun!"

I thought of the poet Gordon's lines and repeated them to her :

"No game was ever yet worth a rap,
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way."

"Ah, but it is true!" she said. "Do you not think Jean would be more entertaining if he was not quite so safe?"

"Did you prefer him as John the Baptist?" I asked.

The pigeon "coo-coo" of laughter made a good-looking young Arab who was seated at the next table look at her; and I fancy he found her good, for I noticed that a few moments later he had changed his chair to one more directly opposite to us. He was a beautiful study in delicate mauves; even his slender shoes were not darker than pale heliotrope.

"Mon Dieu," she said, "but how droll Jean was! And now you see for yourself he cannot take a joke, for if I mention the word *hashish* he becomes quite red with anger." She looked at me with her quick bird-like turn of the head, which is really fixed on in the neatest way possible—"Your husband," she said suddenly, "I should so very much like to meet him—it interests me to know how he looks and why you love him."

"He looks *very, very* nice," I said; "but just because I do love him, I am not quite sure that I should like you to meet him."

"Ah! you think I am no good because I flirt to pass the days with Monsieur Ajeeb?"

"I think you are far too good to look at, my dear, for any woman who has a human husband to feel quite easy in her mind, if you chose to 'make the days pass' at her expense."

"Indeed! But I never would willingly give a friend any unhappiness in that way; it is too wicked, for only just to be a woman makes life full of troubles for her, does it not?"

When la Belge looks serious she is delicious.

"You pretty pigeon," I said, "so even *your* dimples sleep behind clouds sometimes. I don't believe there is a scrap of real malice in your being."

"I hope not *malice*," she said, "and I would not play on even Monsieur Ajeeb's heart if it was fresh and young; but it is just like a very ripe banana which has lain in the sun. And madame his wife—she does not like to sit on that stool outside his shop."

A flower-seller came along at that moment, and I noticed that the harmony in mauves at the next table held up a white hand on which an immense single turquoise stood out like a carbuncle.

He chose a beautiful red carnation and a posy of jessamine fixed on to a thin spike of wood. When the boy had passed on to the next customer (a big high-stomached Moor who bought a white clove-pink to stick over his left ear), the study in mauve paid for his coffee *and saucer* and rose from his table. As he passed us he laid the red carnation with its beautiful long stem in front of la Belge and the posy of jessamine on my lap, and passed on his way without even so much as trying to look through the back of his head.

Mohammed, who keeps a very watchful eye upon us, evidently hinted to Jack that it would be better if we all sat together. I had purposely taken a chair apart with la petite Belge to learn what I could about Monsieur Ajeeb.

And I had learned more than I expected. But of one thing I was perfectly certain—that she is quite able to look after herself and to manage her own affairs; and that the amorous Moor will get a fine sell when he finds that this dimpled thing, whom he imagines is much taken with his handsome person, has slipped through his fingers and taken flight to Europe directly the sad Sylvia has obtained her freedom. I suppose Monsieur Ajeeb thinks that she is as tired of her big “mari rouge” as he is of his cold English wife.

We were all sitting together in pleasant meditation, watching the comings and goings of the ever-varying Orientals and admiring their solemn and picturesque greetings of one another. It is affecting to see two patriarchs with turbaned heads touching one another's breasts. They always rise from their chairs to receive even an intimate friend. The whole square is surrounded with cafés, and all of them had their habitual customers, but I doubt if you would have found two figures dressed exactly alike. Soft mauves and pale greens and delicate flesh-tints on the Arabs and Moors, and exquisite blues and slate-greys on the Jews, were the predominating colours at our café, which was undoubtedly reserved for the better classes. The white burnous, however, was almost universal. Even in the hottest weather an Arab (I use the word broadly) never goes without his burnous, and I really don't wonder, for it is as picturesque, if not as dramatic-looking, as the



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE CAFÉ IN THE PLACE HALFAOUINE

[To face p. 190]

universally admired cloak of the Italian cavalry officer. But the Arab, however great a dandy he may be, never lets his vanity show itself; it is never as strong as his expression of indifference.

At the poorer cafés clothes do not count so much, rough browns and whites predominate, and turbans are conspicuous by their absence. The brown-and-white-striped chemise with a hood, which the poorest Tunisians wear, is a most serf-like garment; no English workhouse could have devised an uglier uniform. You can see hundreds of these strange human zebras squatting about the kerbstones outside markets waiting to carry packages, or sleeping about the streets under the shadows of the whitewashed walls. Only Allah knows what keeps these Oriental sparrows from starving, and He doesn't tell.

Quite unexpectedly a strangely different figure from all the others stood up in front of us. He might have dropped straight from the sky, such a bolt of bright blue he made amongst all the softer and paler tints.

He was a half-caste nigger, a good deal over six feet, with a curiously simple expression. He was dressed in turquoise-blue satin, made of course in the Arab fashion, and lavishly embroidered with gold. His white turban was very white and his neck very long and bare. Mohammed whispered to me: "He is a marabout, and much beloved by the people."

I thought he looked very exhausted and ill, but it might only have been the greyish green tint of his skin. His smile was the most bland and child-like thing you ever saw. But it was Jack, not me, at whom he was gazing with his queer green visionary eyes. Jack certainly seemed to

have taken his fancy, for without more ado this holy man in turquoise-blue satin set himself quietly down on the ground in front of him and continued to gaze up into his face.

I think he must have been a saint of the simple order, for Mohammed seemed to find it difficult to explain what he was talking about ; but I noticed that even he addressed him with much gentleness and respect.

More coffee was ordered at the holy man's expense, or rather at the café's expense, for this is one of the marabouts' privileges, that they can enter a merchant's store and ask him for all sorts of things, which if the merchant is devout he will never refuse, for the holy man does not ask them for himself, but to give to the poor and deserving. Sometimes, however, when a marabout presents you with a valuable gift, like a Spaniard's present it is not meant to be kept—it is, in fact, called for later on. When the scented coffee came, the saint asked for cold water for himself ; when a tumblerful was brought, before raising it to his lips he poured the half of it carefully on the sand beside him.

"Why did he do that, Mohammed?" I asked: "it had some significance, I'm sure?"

"'The earth gave, so the earth must receive'—it is a desert custom."

"Does he also come from the desert?" I asked.

"He has crossed it three times and been to Mecca."

"Three times!" I said; "and it is three thousand miles across!—that must mean some intimacy with silence and the stars."

"You bet it does," Jack said. "But I never saw such a

chap to stare ; he seems to have got a crush on me at the present moment ; you don't think it's baccy, do you ? ”

I couldn't help laughing ; anything more unlike “ baccy ” you never saw.

If he had been a Catholic I should have said he was in a rapt. Jack's knees were wide apart, and the holy thing in bright blue had managed to seat itself like a little child between his long legs and was devouring Jack's embarrassed face with his half-mad, half-saintly eyes.

“ The chap's dotty right enough,” Jack said, “ and you may all enjoy it, but I don't. Ask him what he wants, Mohammed, or what he finds odd about me.”

La petite Belge said : “ You don't appreciate the honour he is paying you. Look at all these nice dignified people as they pass ; they kiss the hem of his garment, or they try to touch his hand, and beg for a blessing—while you, whom he has chosen, only laugh at him. Poor thing, he looks so gentle and really good ! Please ask him, Monsieur Mohammed, to bless me.”

Mohammed repeated her request in Arabic. The saint lifted his glassy eyes from Jack's face and looked at la Belge and then at me, and I think he must have made a mistake as to which of us had asked for the blessing, for he solemnly handed *me* the beautiful string of amber beads which he had been holding in his hands ; each bead was as large as a pigeon's egg and the colour of a golden plum.

La petite Belge forgot her ardent request for a blessing ; it was now his amber rosary she craved.

“ Look, are they not perfection against the blue satin of his coat ? How I would love to have them ! ”

“ Please wait,” I said, for I felt the moment to be almost

as solemn as the laying-on of hands by a bishop at confirmation, "he is telling Mohammed something. What is it, Mohammed?"

"You are to hold these beads so—in your two hands, against your heart."

I held them as Mohammed told me for about two minutes, then the marabout took them back, and, looking at them very gravely, murmured a sura of the Koran over them, and again handed them to me and told me to hold them to my heart once more.

While I was doing so he asked for another glass of water; he looked even more exhausted than when he sat down at Jack's feet. His thin lips were not black like a nigger's, but grey and parched. Without being really good-looking he was undoubtedly attractive and very elegant, while no one could deny but that he had to an extraordinary degree that saintly personality which one meets sometimes in monks and nuns. You felt that many times in the solitude of the desert this simple man had walked and talked with God.

After having restored to mother earth a portion of the second tumbler of water and having gulped down the other half, he took back the beautiful amber rosary, and raising it to his lips kissed it, and again with bowed head recited some words over it.

I did not discover what the nature of the blessing was that he bestowed upon me, but I felt duly grateful, and I trust I am the better for it. I hope it did not fall upon stony ground.

La petite Belge went away unblessed, for the call to prayer came from the minarets just as I had returned

the rosary. Very quietly the marabout slipped the golden beads, which looked like drops of solidified wine, into his wide trouser pocket, and after kissing Jack's hands he rose from his adoring attitude and held out his own hand in a strangely European fashion to bid us farewell.

I took his dark hand in mine and almost dropped it with horror—the pink palm was as rough as a toad's warty back and as moist as its cold belly! Poor holy man! who gave you these awful hands, in this land where hands like lotus lilies spring from the very mud fair and beautiful. We silently watched the tall figure in bright blue join the throng of portly natives in white burnouses which were passing through that forbidden door.

One after another the Arabs rose from their chairs or benches and turned their dignified steps towards the mosque until only the darker-clad figures of the Jews were left seated at the café.

We waited on until it was almost dark and till the lights were beginning to be lit, for in the south there is little lingering of time between daylight and dark. The storytellers were beginning to take up their places in their special cafés, which would soon have their chairs all occupied again. The art of story-telling is carried on to even a greater extent in Tunis than in Sicily, for the Tunisian is a tremendous admirer of oratory and elocution. Perhaps this last taste has been handed down to him from Carthaginian times, when the North African schools of rhetoric were even more famous than those of Athens.

I have just been reading how St Augustine (who even in his most giddy days was always striving after the Truth) turned away from his study of the Bible in despair.

Accustomed as he was to the specious and metaphysical style of the famous rhetoricians of Carthage, the Bible seemed to him to possess no artistic merits. Indeed it struck him as vulgar and poor. Dear human St Augustine, he was an equally ardent sinner and saint. At the age of twenty he went to Carthage in search of Love. In his *Confessions* there are delightful glimpses of his gay days at young and godless Carthage. What a fine blade he was! And Carthage, richest of all the cities of its day—just to think of it now, that long line of yellow earth with only St Louis' Cathedral standing up like a lighthouse from its ruins! How shall I write of it when I have been there? For the great event I have been reading up everything I can find (and, I may add, understand) on the subject.

But to return to the café. During the feast of the Ramadhan the popular Place Halfaouine, where we were sitting, must be a marvellous sight, for here the shadow-plays and ballad-chanters and workers in black magic, and quacks of every sort, open their shows every evening just as soon as the signal has been heard which breaks the fast at sundown. Theatres, where the actors take the form of beasts, marionette plays, which were probably introduced into Tunis by the Sicilians, but which are now very popular with the Arabs, are all here at their finest every evening during the Mohammedan Lent. But the story-tellers are the most popular of all. The reciter holds only a few leaves of the romance in his hands, for it takes him all the evening to deliver a small portion with that proper regard for style and effect which his audience expect. It is not unlikely that the complete tragedy would spread over a hundred and one Tunisian nights. Mohammed says

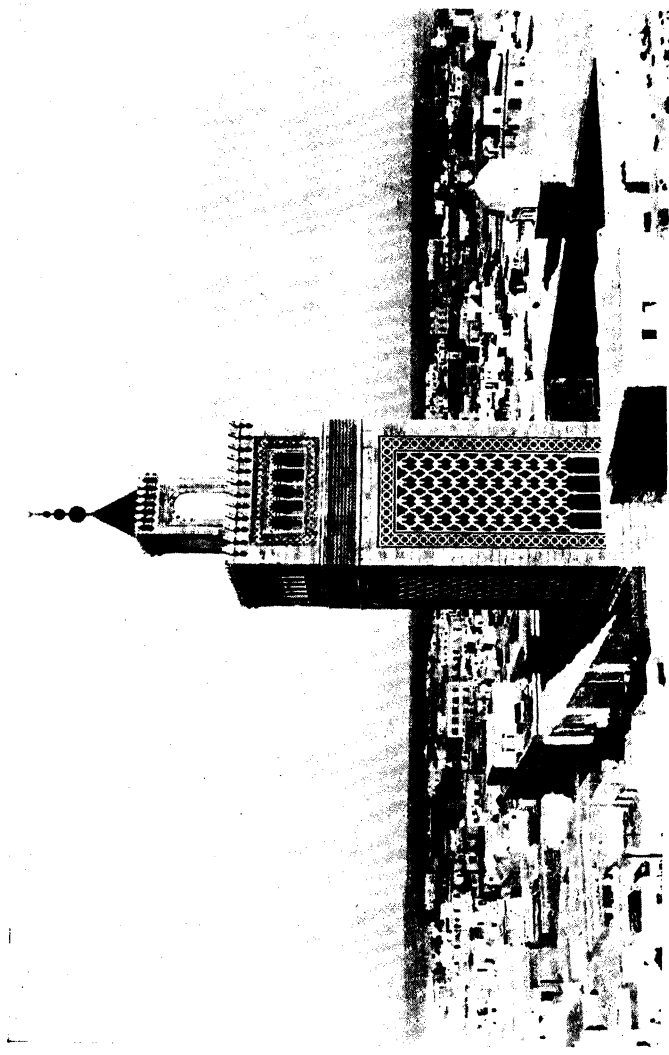


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

VIEW OF TUNIS FROM THE DAR-EL-BEY

their romances are interminable. But the reciter holds the interest of his audience in a marvellous way; you could hear a turbaned head turn at any time during the long evening's entertainment, so intense is the stillness. Even Arab women are allowed to listen to these stories and enjoy all the fun of the fair during the feast of the Ramadhan. Tunis is a very good place to see these things, for everyone agrees that in matters touching religious observances and domestic life it is still fanatically Mohammedan.

Personally I could have sat all night in that café and watched the fiery clouds of sunset pale into the night blue of the south, and waited for the African moon to ride up and keep its watch over the flatness of the silent city. Only the minarets and domes, those two unmistakable tokens of Allah, raise their heads from "The White Burnous."

But la petite Belge said that nothing made her "man of wrath" so wrathful as when she is late for the solemn dinner ceremony, so we hurried towards the tram.

"Does he find the pepper good in Tunis?" I asked; "he has stayed some time."

La Belge gave my arm a little pinch. "Oh, you are so naughty!" she said; "but let me tell you how I managed. I told the *maitre d'hôtel* that my husband never could be troubled to leave any place if he was comfortable, that it was *I* who always had to make him go. So if the food was good, and the cigars were cheap, he would stay on and on. 'And, monsieur,' I said, 'I wish to stay on in Tunis; I find it amuses me.' So every night we have such beautiful dinners, such great delicacies, and every night I listen to Jean when he tells me how good and cheap the cigars are and how very excellent is the food. I pay

the *maitre d'hôtel* for these nice luxuries at dinner and for the balance on all the cigars which Jean thinks so very cheap." She gave a little laugh. "It is a very good arrangement. I prefer to stay in Tunis—it amuses me; and if I spend my money in that way—in pleasing my husband—whom does it hurt?"

"No one," I said, "and you only act up to the golden rule, 'feed the beast.'"

"Poor Jean!" she said, "the most of husbands are worse than he—I always say that to myself. It is only foolish to be sad because husbands are not lovers; perhaps wives are not always sweethearts."

"You dimpled philosopher," I said, "I believe you would have made the best of Monsieur Ajeeb."

"It would not be for one's happiness to make the worst, if you wish to be gay—is that not so? He is vain; it would have amused me, perhaps, to flatter his vanity. Food and flattery keep most men kind and gentle. *Tact*, I think you call it, is the only strength a wife has. Monsieur Ajeeb has told me of one very pretty custom which happens at a Jewish wedding which illustrates the fact.

"At the first meal which a husband and wife eat together after their marriage, a large fish is set before the husband. He goes to carve it, but he cannot break the bones, for the bride's mother has inserted a backbone and fins made of wood into the fish, and has instructed her daughter where the joints can easily be divided. He tries once, twice, and three times—but he fails. The young wife then offers to try, and by her finer skill and by her knowledge of where the joints are, she quite easily cuts a portion off and hands it to her husband!

"Perhaps if Madame Ajeeb had known just where the division lay in the matrimonial mullet she too would have served that fish!"

"Poor Madame Ajeeb!" I said, "she was not built that way; those eyes would have betrayed her if she had attempted the gentle art of flattery, and alas! she had no mother to teach her how to carve that fish. But tell me," I said, "as his wife, would Monsieur Ajeeb have found you so very amusing?"

"*Mais non*, but a Moor does not look to his wife for amusement or affection; she is saved these two duties."

She gave a little shrug of her shoulders. "He is white and his long eyes are grey-blue, the true eyes of an Andalusian Spaniard, but he is an *Oriental*; and not for worlds, nor for all the moon and stars, would I be his wife. How did a countrywoman of yours consent?"

"She was, I believe, so ignorant or innocent, whichever way you like to look upon it, that the whole situation conveyed nothing to her. He was a descendant of an Andalusian noble family; he talked to her of his Spanish blood, of which he has probably not one drop. At the time she was nominally a companion to a Servian princess (of sorts) in Palermo, but really had to do the work of a badly paid lady's maid. The princess, who gambled all night and slept all day, had visited Tunis and knew Monsieur Ajeeb, whose business took him to Palermo. A Sicilian had absconded with some bonds of his, and he went to recover them. He met the princess, also the beautiful Sylvia, who was, poor thing, desperately unhappy and desperately poor; every penny she had in the world she

had used to pay her journey from London to Palermo to meet the princess."

"Yes, poor thing," la petite Belge said, "life has not been kind to one so beautiful."

"He was a white Oriental in *Christian clothing*, you must remember, for in Palermo he did not walk about like one of the ghosts of King Roger's Mohammedan city. Fancy," I said, "can you picture to yourself Palermo as it was in the days when it was more Mohammedan than Constantinople itself? King Roger was called the baptized Emir."

Our chatter was flowing on in this way when a very pretty incident happened, which I must tell you.

La petite Belge is the sort of woman who brings out the romantic side of most men's characters. When we left the tram we found that the road had been watered; it was very dirty and covered with wet dust. La Belge was carefully selecting her first step.

"You will soil those champagne-coloured shoes and silk stockings," I said; "they are as pretty as any Arab's."

"I know it," she said; "but what can I do?—I cannot fly; if big Jean were here he would carry me—for these things he is very good."

Jack and Mohammed were waiting for us a few yards farther on, or I'm sure Jack would have risen to the occasion. Just at that moment a young Arab student in the colours of the Sadiki college (a beautiful vision of apricot cloth and white silk stockings) passed us and took in the situation at a glance. Before la petite Belge had planted her first foolish foot on the river of wet dust, the

stately cavalier had spread his fine white-tasselled burnous right across the road !

I know I should have hesitated, and with an English-woman's embarrassment spoilt the situation ; but not so la Belge, who walked on her knight's cloak of apricot cashmere as lightly and naturally as though this was the sort of thing they did in her country for a pretty woman every day !

With the perfection of grace she bowed her thanks, and then for one moment paused. When we had gone on our way I noticed that the crimson carnation which the study in mauves had presented to her was no longer in her hands.

* * * * *

"How very pretty," she said ; " that was the spirit of old Spain—imagine my big Jean doing that ! "

"Imagine anyone but yourself not being clumsy over it."

"But why?" she said in surprise ; " you could not snub the poor man for so delicate an act."

"Not snub," I said ; " it was the prettiest little incident imaginable—I would not have missed it for worlds—but it required you to complete it. You were born charming, and charming you will remain, and there's an end of it."

And now, dear, with that pretty picture before you, I will say good-night.

Your loving wife,

DORIS.

CHAPTER XI

TUNIS, May 19—.

MY DEAR HUSBAND,

This letter will be rather Jewish and early Christian in character, I am afraid, for since I dispatched my last budget to you I have watched the horrible Jewish dancers and visited the ugly little Jewish village of El-Ariana and seen a Catholic confirmation service in the new cathedral in the French town. This last event set me thinking about the history of the early Catholic Church in Africa—which, of course, had never entered my head until I came to Tunis.

As far as I can gather, the word *El* which is prefixed to so many of the Arab names here means simply "The," and *Sidi*, which occurs quite as often (for every mosque is Sidi something or other), translates itself as nearly as possible into "Seigneur." Thus Sidi-Bou-Said signifies "Seigneur St Louis," for the Tunisians declare that under the big dome in the mosque of Sidi-Bou-Said lie the boiled bones of Louis, king and saint. The natives swear that his dear bones were buried in Mohammedan soil because he died a devout Mohammedan! The art of embalming bodies had died out in North Africa by the time of St Louis's death, so his poor emaciated body was boiled in water to preserve the precious bones and the heart, and, I have no doubt, his toe-nails as well, for so valuable had saints' relics become by that date that they were a source of great income to the Church. When St Louis landed in Carthage in 1220 its greatness was ancient history.

Carthage was a thing of the past—it was a city of ruins.

It is just as likely of course that the great Bishop of Hippo, the devout St Augustine himself, reverted to paganism at his death. Do you remember the altar-tomb in Monreale Cathedral in Sicily, where St Louis' insides are supposed to rest? They were taken there by his brother the King of Sicily, who went to Trapani to receive them, and at the same time tried to wreck the ships of the other Crusaders for their treasure. I once made a little pilgrimage to the Gothic chapel where St Louis took his last communion in France before he started on the Crusades. It is in Aucassin's castle of Beaucaire. What a far cry from Tunis! It seems strange now to be living in Africa where his great white memorial-cathedral glitters everlastingly before my eyes on the yellow Carthaginian skyline! I should dearly love to see the cathedral at Hippo which has been raised to the memory of St Augustine, to compare it with St Louis'; but you, dearest, are to take me there and to Kairowan, the city which was built by the Saracens as a stronghold against the Crusaders.

What blades these young Crusaders were! Not many of them were inspired, I'm afraid, with the same ardent spirit of Christianity as St Louis. But he came of a very pious stock. His mother was almost as saintly and even more beautiful than gentle St Monica herself, and his sister was a famous abbess, and one at least of his sons died of the plague while he was with his father in Africa fighting for the banner of Christ. But for the majority of the Crusaders, going to fight the Saracens was just like going to Oxford or Cambridge—it was the correct thing

to do at the time. Their social station demanded it. It doesn't do to look too carefully into their treatment of the infidels; if you do, the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition become commonplace. I wonder if the body of armed priests which to-day the Catholic Church in Africa keeps in splendid fighting trim is more Christian in its methods of warfare against the fanatical Moors and border-raiders. These tonsured soldiers seem to be a sort of rebirth of the old Knights Hospitallers in Africa. I suppose they were instigated by Cardinal Lavigerie, "the Marabout rouge," as he is familiarly called in Tunis, and belong to the same Order as the Pères Blancs at Carthage.

St Louis and St Augustine are two instances of great men having had great and good mothers. How naïvely St Augustine in his *Confessions* tells of how his mother, while quite a girl—indeed while almost a child—became addicted to the habit of intemperance. Her father used to send her to draw the wine for his meals from the big casks in the family cellar. The girl took to sipping the rich African wines, because the taste was so good, until little by little she took the drink for drink's sake; so noticeable had her intemperance become that her waiting-maid, who disliked the lovely Monica, taunted her with the shameful fact. This was the saving of her. It was the scorn and derision of her servant which cured her of the habit for ever.

Perhaps it was the memory of this early vice that made St Monica so forgiving to her son, although the terrible dissipations and vices in which he indulged at Carthage almost broke her heart.

This morning I did a little shopping in the French town, with St Augustine's Carthaginian days running in my head



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE AVENUE DE FRANCE AND PORTE DE FRANCE, TUNIS

all the time ; more particularly his youthful " wrecking " days than his middle-aged years of pious priesthood, I must admit.

When I was shopping, the cathedral bells began making a great clanging (their Christian ringing always comes as a surprise in this land of mosques and synagogues), and presently I saw an unusual number of French and Italian women hurrying towards the cathedral.

Inside the cathedral, which is pleasingly spacious and rich in precious marbles, there was a confirmation service just commencing. As I have spent my Tunisian days so entirely in the bazaars and in the streets of the native city, where the absence of the feminine is very marked, this religious ceremony came as a curious surprise—it was so conspicuously feminine. The white marble building was flooded with the fluttering veils of childish figures dressed as brides of the Church. Their dark heads were wreathed with white roses and their starched muslin dresses were as clear and white as snow. Each self-conscious little child-woman carried in her hands some gift—an amethyst rosary or ivory-bound prayer-book—a memento of her *première communion*, that all-important event which marks the step between childhood and maturity.

Parents and relatives were bestowing tearful and cheerful kisses and congratulations, not only upon their own little daughters, but upon every child in the building. The scene was strangely affecting.

These poor little mites—some of them, I am sure, no more than seven years old—were apparently considered by their parents old enough to be held responsible for their own wrongs and misdoings. They had, I suppose, made

their first confession, and would henceforth be fully initiated into the mysteries.

As these little brides of the Church swept out of the building and down the flight of steps like a flock of white pigeons, accompanied by their friends and relatives, into the wide Avenue de la Marine, I said: "Am I really in Mohammedan Tunis? This might be Paris, and these little children might be going off to play in the Bois de Boulogne, where they will show off their beautiful *première communion* dresses and veils to their admiring friends!" Vain little sprigs of Christianity they looked, but how delightfully picturesque! Yet it was the East, for the groups of splendid palms which face the cathedral do not spend the winters of their discontent in tubs or under glass, nor do they even find it necessary to wear winter coats of sacking; and these groups of Arabs standing under their dark shade watching these white-veiled children of Christ—they are the very people of the soil, and not human exhibits strayed from an exhibition into the Boulevard des Italiens.

As I watched these new communicants dispersing in the fierce African sunlight, I could not help thinking to myself that they were the living tokens that here again in North Africa was the Catholic Church of Christ. Here again, after all these lapsed centuries, the banner of Christ had been planted on that ancient and historic soil. But alas! gone are the St Augustines, gone are the St Cyprians and the St Louises!

I wondered if the priests who prepared these little communicants for this great event had stirred their young hearts with the glorious history of the early Christian

Church in North Africa. Did the personality of St Augustine mean any more to them than it does to any other little Catholic child whose duty it is to learn by heart the saints, and their festivals in the Church Calendar? Were St Augustine and St Louis and St Cyprian any more real and human to them, with Carthage lying not half-an-hour's journey from their homes? Did they realise that it was Carthage—that yellow strip of land out yonder, under that blue sky, and not Rome, with all her pride of Popes and Church—which led the Christian world in its infancy? Or does this new spick-and-span white cathedral in the Avenue de la Marine mean to them nothing more than an exiles' Church in a dry and barren land?

Have they any idea in their youthful minds that this same Catholic Church was once so firmly established in Carthage that it was, in the early centuries, just as much the correct thing to be a Christian as it is to-day in France or England? It was in fact (in the third century) almost necessary to be a professing Christian. It was the Carthaginian social hall-mark, so to speak—the stamp which distinguished the citizens from the barbarians and savages of the hills, just as the Church of England had its social value with us. But the sincerity and earnestness which inflamed the early Christians soon died out in the vicious society of the richest and most brilliant and wantonly extravagant city in the civilised world. The teachings of Christ had become such a *very* old story that they lost their original meaning. Christianity was merely an accepted convention, which had no effect on the morals of the people. St Cyprian spent the fire of his eloquence in preaching against the love of luxury and denouncing the hideous vices

common amongst the professing Christians of the city. How he thundered at the gay ladies of Carthage (and how little they heeded him) for their unparalleled love of dress and jewels! He had a hard time of it, poor saint, for these Carthaginian women of Christian Africa had received a liberal education, for many centuries before his great day, in the evils of over-civilisation. They made "vice a fine art, and a social cult of Christianity."

Yet I find it hard to realise that all this country was Christian long, long before it was Mohammedan. To me Mohammedanism seems as indigenous to the soil as palm-trees. It certainly "caught on" with the natives in a way which Christianity never did, for even in its most vigorous years Christianity was the religion of the Romans in Africa, and not of the Arabs and Moors or Berbers. Bosworth Smith says: "Mohammedanism, for causes as deep as human nature itself, seems destined always to maintain its hold on the Eastern world," and Bosworth Smith goes on to say, after having told us something very learned about Queen Dido: "We know also as a fact that, so long as Carthage stood, Dido was worshipped there as a goddess; it seems probable therefore that the forlorn foundress of the mighty city was originally nothing but the patron goddess of the whole Phœnician race." How nice it is of learned men to tell us these things, although they are polite enough to say that of course we know them already.

It is strange that these Phœnician Carthaginians, who have given history no legendary heroes like Perseus or Jason, and whose instincts were trade, trade, trade, and never warfare, should have raised up amongst them the greatest military genius of all time. For Hannibal is of

course the one outstanding name in Carthaginian history. His name breathes the thunder of battles. Yet he came of this trading, commercial middle-class race who dumped down their little factories and money-grubbing colonists in all the most favoured ports of the Mediterranean. The building up of a great nation didn't appeal to them; they didn't seem to care a fig about Imperialism. Their rich colonies existed only for the purpose of making money; they would have rented them all if they could, as Carthage itself was rented even in its greatest days.

The picture Carthage always called up in my childish mind was the cutting-up of that famous ox-hide tape measure and the laying of it down on the ground to mark out the site of Queen Dido's city. How ingeniously they contrived to get their full pound of flesh, these Jewish traders from Tyre. I can still see, when I shut my eyes, the blue-and-white-spotted silk dress which I thought Queen Dido wore on the day when Æneas landed and found her inspecting her subjects. And now I don't suppose she ever did stand and watch her men lay out the city or that Æneas ever landed there at all.

I can't think how they are going to teach history to little girls in the future if they say all the nicest parts are fibs, and try to make out that the wicked people were not really so wicked after all. They are trying their best to spoil even Lucretia Borgia; and as for Gian Galeazzo Sforza and Ludovico il Moro, they are now both nearly *quite* good. I don't mind Mary Queen of Scots being canonised and proved not to have been a partner in Darnley's murder, if they don't take away her lovers. Seriously, I don't know who will be left! Even Henry VIII. is being forgiven for his

By the Waters of Carthage

Bluebeard chamber just because the Reformation sprang from the ashes of poor Anne Boleyn's divorce. All I know is that I shouldn't like to be the little boys and girls going to school nowadays, if there aren't going to be any more wicked King Johns and Bloody Marys.

* * * * *

And now to the Jewish village, El-Ariana. Being Saturday, I told Mohammed I wanted to go there. I was anxious to see if I had been doing the young Tunisian Jewesses an injustice, for you meet but few walking in the streets of their quarter in the city, or in the French town, who don't wear the high head-dress (the token of the lawfully wedded wife) and who are not the shape of a weaver's bobbin full of yarn. The way they taper up to the top of the steeplejack hats and down to the toes of their idiotic little feet and bulge out in the middle is truly comic. I could throw over most mountainous matrons with a gentle push.

Well, the village itself is hideous, whatever its roses may be for which it is famous. It has not one redeeming feature, and if it has a saint's tomb I did not see it. But no doubt it has, for the Jews have taken on the Moham-medan cult of saint-worship to a great extent. Saintship is hereditary with the Jews, just as it is with the Moham-medans, but then so also is the profession of undertaker! I should *not* care to be a Jewish undertaker, for he has to watch over the dead body for three whole nights in the cemetery before it is entombed. There is, Mohammed says, one Jewish family in Tunis called Alfassi, who, ever since the eleventh century, have derived a large income from one of the synagogues which receives the offerings



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

JEWS MOURNING IN THEIR CEMETERY

for the particular saint of that family. Sometimes the different branches of a family have terrible disputes at the tomb of a saint for their share of the profits. The great Jewish saint here is "Rabbi Simeon," whose popularity is greater in Tunis than in any other Jewish centre. His festival really is very pretty—at least, so Mohammed says—for it is a sort of flower carnival. All the Jewish families walk in little communities carrying exquisite flowers to his tomb. There is of course great rivalry and competition in the magnificence of their floral offerings. Perhaps the famous roses of Ariana are grown on purpose for the festival of Rabbi Simeon. The more famous Jewish fête, the "Feast of the Mutton," when thousands and thousands of sheep are slaughtered and eaten, can't be so picturesque. This feast of mutton sounds very pagan, doesn't it? But it is to the Mohammedan saint Sidi-Mahrez that they owe their liberty and commercial privileges in Tunis to-day, so no wonder that they are liberal in their offerings of candles at his tomb!

If El-Ariana had been a Mohammedan village the saint's tomb would have mothered the whole place, just as a cathedral mothers a small English town, for Tunisian Mohammedans seem to venerate their saints even more than the Prophet himself. Saint-worship seems to be in their blood, for St Augustine is always alluding to the danger of the exaggerated importance and honour paid to saints by the Carthaginian Christians. The glorification of the Father and of His Son was almost lost in the adulation of the local saints.

In Tunis, however, Jewish religious life is not conspicuous. Their poor little synagogues, mere houses used

as meeting-places, have nothing in common with the superb synagogues in Bayswater or Manchester. In Tunis the prayer of St Chrysostom seems to be carried out to the letter, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there will I be in the midst of them."

So much is this the case that where many branches of a family live in one house they don't trouble to go to their synagogue, but hold their meetings in their home. To spend money on beautifying their houses of prayer evidently does not appeal to them, and so domestic is their style of architecture that in some cases a portion of the synagogue is let off as lodgings; this of course in the East is no uncommon occurrence, for Buddhists constantly allow travellers to sleep in their temples in Japan.

I popped into one synagogue to-day just to see what was going on. Some Jewesses were in a sort of top gallery where they must pray apart from the men, and down below a lot of men were lolling about and laughing and discussing, I should think, their business affairs. So with the Tunisian Jews, at any rate, it is easy to see that their synagogue is not the House of God, but a meeting-place where men pray to God.

M. Lapie, who has been a Professor in Tunis, in his most excellent little book *Civilisations Tunisiennes*, dwells at some length upon the domestic style of the architecture of both Tunisian mosques and synagogues. He declares that the interiors of the mosques are modelled very closely after the interiors of Arab houses; that they are, in fact, glorified *houses* of prayer; and that just as a man is the head of his household, so God is the father of the mosque, and it suits their ideas to model His house after their own.

For this I cannot answer, for of course I have never crossed those forbidden doors. He even goes so far as to say that it was not upon religious fanatical scruples that Christians were first forbidden to enter Tunisian mosques, but upon the ground that all houses in Mohammedan cities are sacred to their owners and strictly forbidden to strangers. This, I think, is difficult to believe, for jealously guarded as Arab houses are, I would sooner attempt to enter one uninvited than to step across the portal of a mosque. He also asserts that the Jews, who always assimilate the social and domestic customs and fashions of whatever community they live in, have built their synagogues as the Mohammedans have built their mosques—in the peculiarly domestic style. But the Jews show not the slightest objection to Christians or infidels entering the synagogues, and always most cordially invite strangers to come into their houses.

M. Lapie also suggests the theory that the Mohammedans' rooted objection to being photographed or painted, or to having any but conventionalised figures in their art, had originally nothing to do with religion; that the Koran says nothing about it; that it originated in nothing higher than the jealousy of Oriental men of their women, and their refusal to allow any man to see them unveiled (except their husbands or nearest relatives). Mohammed says that *of course* the Prophet gave no orders on the subject of veiling, for long before his day it had been the custom for Eastern women to veil themselves before men; but Mohammed insists, in spite of what M. Lapie says, on the fact that their religion strictly forbids Moslems reproducing in painting or in architecture the form of any living creature.

M. Lapie argues that if the painting and modelling of realistic figures had once been permitted in their art, the beautiful feminine figures could never have been kept out—and that that was the root of the whole matter. “For imagine,” he says, “Greek art without its Venuses.”

Certainly the Bedouins have no objection to being photographed—in fact, they rather like it—and they are always unveiled; and if the reason was, as I at first thought it might be, merely a superstition that it was considered unlucky, then the Bedouins would be the surest to object to it—they would be the last to allow it. These jealousies on the part of Oriental men have been so carefully nourished by their women that this objection to being portrayed in art has become through time a part of their religious belief. This is M. Lapie’s idea, not my own.

* * * * *

When we arrived at El-Ariana it was about half-past three. The Jewish *passeggiatoa* was in full swing. The sunny white road was gay with brightly trousered women, who waddled along in twos and twos on high-heeled patent-leather slippers. They were young girls for the most part, I suppose, although they all looked coarse and fat enough to be mothers of forty; but they had their swarthy black heads tied round with bright silk handkerchiefs, which hung down their backs entwined with a long black pigtail of very Jewish hair, and not surmounted with the glittering gold head-dress of thirteenth-century build, the token of wifehood.

This Jewish promenade was almost as conspicuously feminine as a Mohammedan crowd is masculine. Hanging round the cafés and houses I noticed a few men gazing



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

LOWER-CLASS ARAB WOMEN

To face p. 214

with covetous eyes at the charms of these heavy-headed women. Why Tunisian Jewesses have such enormous heads I cannot make out ; but they have, and this adds to their general coarse and underbred appearance. Their trousers were undoubtedly the best part of them. *They* were splendid ! Mohammed told me that some of the best of them must have cost at least fifteen pounds ! The rest of their garments I thought distinctly shoddy. There were, I should think, at least fifty couples of young Jewesses parading up and down the dusty street. When a little puff of wind came their voluminous trousers flapped about like exaggerated sailors' breeches and their head-towels fluttered in the breeze. Here the Western order of things was splendidly reversed, for the men, when they did appear, were for the most part enveloped in cloaks which reached down to their feet like women's skirts.

Blue was evidently the popular colour, but some of them wore mauve, and even puce. The real gala costume of the Jewish women, however, consists as a rule in blue satin breeches, as tight as men's leggings from the ankle to the knee, blazing with heavy gold embroidery which is carried half-way up the thigh, where the satin suddenly swells out into a balloon-like fullness, and an ugly little loose dressing-jacket of the most European-looking build with huge puff sleeves. This little coatee is very much the same as the Arab women wear, only it is longer, and helps to accentuate the ample breadth of their shoulders. But strangest of all the strange items of their strange costume is the stockingette long-sleeved vest which they wear to cover their uncorseted figures from waist to neck. This *awful* garment is generally striped like a Frenchman's bathing-drawers,

By the Waters of Carthage

and has the same ghastly effect upon the figure. The dressing-jacket is so loose, and the puff sleeves so short, that almost the whole of the jersey is visible.

Amongst all the living races of semi-civilised mankind is there a coarser, more bestial-looking woman than the Tunisian puppy-fed Jewess?

But their menkind seem quite proud of them, and the women themselves no doubt annoy each other immensely by the splendour of their blue satin drawers and the vastness of their proportions.

Nothing happened in the little village, and nothing seemed in the least likely to happen. The Jewish Sunday amusement seemed to consist in the wearing of their best clothes and walking about arm-in-arm on the side-walk of the village main street. And oh, the ugliness of that street! Occasionally a man and his wife joined the bands of unmarried girls, but no unmarried men walked with these Israelitish virgins of El-Ariana. Mohammed says that the Tunisian Jewesses do not live the same immured lives as the Arab women, that they are allowed to see and speak to men who are not their relatives, but that in the choice of husbands they are not one whit better off really than their Mohammedan sisters. Their husbands are chosen for them by their parents from a purely commercial point of view.

A Jewish wedding is one of the things I *ought* to see, and Mahommed says that there is not the slightest difficulty in doing so. But somehow my appetite for things Jewish received a very great shock after watching the dancers. I doubt if I shall risk another Jewish entertainment.

In Tunis, as elsewhere, the Jews have almost every trade



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

GROCERS' SHOPS AND THE ZITOUNA MOSQUE IN
THE TUNIS BAZAAR

[To face p. 216]

in their own hands. Even in the souks, where certain trades are still reserved for Arabs, Jews really own the shops, for it is their money which finances the business ; but they are astute enough to make an Arab their agent and put his name over the door, and so put the necessary face on the affair.

Not so very long ago you could have heard the tinkling of bells on their clothes to warn you of their approach, and they had to take off their boots when they passed a mosque.

Now they have commercial rights and are outwardly treated as equals. Sidi-Mahrez was more a friend to the enterprising Hebrew than to the improvident Arabs, I'm afraid, for since his day they have gone on increasing in numbers and in wealth and importance until to-day a Jew is the Bey's Minister of Finance, and Jews, not Moham-medans, have power and patronage to bestow in native Tunis. There is, however, one means of livelihood in which they have no desire to oust the Arab, and that is agriculture. The Jew is no dweller in remoteness apart from the haunts of men.

The Arab, on the other hand, who has absolutely no commercial instincts, energy, or enterprise, and whose soul despises trade for the mere sake of making money, looks, as he has always looked, upon agriculture and land as the natural sources of man's income. He does not fear the silence of the fields, and the gathering in of crops is his pleasure. Dear improvident gentleman that he is, he has but one idea about money—and that is to keep what he has got ; while the Jew's great and absorbing interest in life is to double and treble it. In theory Arab boys of all classes have an ideal education in the technical sense of the word,

for they are all compelled to learn a number of trades, which, I fear, when they grow up they seldom put into use. Two days in the week, for instance, they devote to shoe-making, another to book-binding, a third to saddlery, and so on, the idea being that when the rainy day comes they will be able to turn their hands to a variety of trades. The Jews are perhaps wiser : they all, poor and rich alike, completely master one trade.

The Mohammedans are now so tolerant of the Jews that at first a stranger finds it really difficult to distinguish between the two, for the Jews love to copy the Arabs as closely as possible, both in costume and customs. Naturally the Arabs love them none the more, since they have learnt to fear them as well as despise them ; of course they never intermarry. But the " carrion sons of carrion," as they are called, are now powerful enough not to care ; they are the masters where they were once the despised slaves. There is a very old legend which is supposed partly to account for the fanatical hatred which Mohammedans have for the Jews. I read it to-day in Hesse Wartegg's book on Tunis, but I will try to put it briefly for you.

In the second century of the Mohammedan calendar, which of course you know dates itself not from the birth of Mohammed but from the year of " the flight," the Jews insulted the caravan which goes every year to Mecca laden with offerings of faithful Moslems. To punish this outrage God killed all the male Jews in the world. But in His mercy He did not allow the whole race to die out, so He permitted the husbands to rise from the dead upon one night in the year and return to their wives. In this way the race was saved from total extinction.

The Italian and Sicilian are content with such very small things that they will never cause any commercial heart-burnings, for like the Arab the Sicilian's wants are small and his ambitions lowly. He will wake me, wretched man, every morning in my most precious hour of slumber by bawling out in his full-vowelled Latin voice, "Cartolini postali, due per tre soldi, due per tre soldi"; and he will sell his soldi's worth of ice-cream to little Arab boys and French nursemaids; and he will wheel his hand-truck of cheap Italian rubbish up and down the broad Avenue de France all day long, and he will *never* grow rich. It is not his forte. But the Rue d'Église is his most popular haunt, and the Rue d'Église is right under my bedroom window. How I have longed to buy up his whole stock-in-trade of "cartolini postali, due per tre soldi" and ask him to go home to bed, for who on earth ever wanted to write or send off a picture post-card of Tunis at six A.M., or even earlier? But if I did buy up his trayful I know he would appear with another in five minutes, and scream all the louder; there is no buying him off, so I lie and listen to that piercing cry and curse the day post-cards were invented.

And now I must tell you an amusing incident which relates to more personal matters. Just as we were leaving the tram entrance to the long palm avenue which introduces you to the public park and Belvedere, my attention was attracted by a carriage drawn by two especially long-tailed Arab horses. It was turning out of the park gates.

The carriage was rather American in make; the whole turn-out was in first-class style. I looked at it with interest, for a superb-looking native was seated in it, and I was

By the Waters of Carthage

anxious to see what manner of man he was who owned the enviable horses.

Mohammed's grave voice startled me—"Do you not recognise your friend, madame?"

Just as he spoke I saw the crown of la petite Belge's favourite hat, and the white of the beautifully rolled and cross-folded turban of Monsieur Ajeeb.

They were seated side by side, with the big "mari rouge" directly opposite to them.

La petite Belge waved a little handkerchief and Monsieur Ajeeb bowed profoundly; the Angry Saxon didn't see me.

"What beautiful horses Monsieur Ajeeb is driving, Mohammed," I said; "are they his own?"

"Yes; the Tunisians are very fond of driving, and they are good judges of horseflesh. The rich Moors of Tunis have copied the French and Italians in their carriages and harness, but they still like their own horses best; you will see in the park many young Arabs driving even finer horses than these."

And I did, but thank goodness they had not been silly enough to adopt French clothes; it was amusing to see them, burnoused and turbaned, sitting in all their "B.C." stateliness in modern racing-buggies with exaggeratedly elongated shafts and fine flowing-tailed steeds. Of course the very lightly built traps suited the slim build of their horses to perfection, so they went like the wind. But it is odd to see a city Arab doing anything quickly, even driving; his dignified bearing was originally intended for the lordly pace of the camel.

Occasionally you see a rider mounted high on a slim white Arab horse with a tail floating behind it in orthodox

Oriental fashion, his white burnous covering the beast's hindquarters, just as a cavalryman's cloak covers his charger on parade days at home.

I should so much like to see a "Fantasia," as the grand review of the Bey's six hundred soldiers is called; but, poor man, he is still ill, so there is little chance of my seeing one. I am sure it is fantastic in every sense of the word.

The park, which is sweepingly termed the "Belvedere," is *quite* charming, so cool and full of sweet green shelters. The effect of irrigation in this country is magical. There is no doubt about it that in the time of the Romans irrigation must have been carried to a very fine point, for we read of the gardens and parks and vineyards and splendid corn-fields which surrounded Carthage, and you can easily see that literally nothing would ever have grown on this sun-burnt plain without irrigation. I think the Romans had aqueducts on the brain. The remains of the mighty one which Hadrian built stretches across this country like a huge black snake. It is almost as impressive as the one which rises up out of the Campagna near Rome. Though Tunis has still to thank those Roman masons for her waterways, in justice to the French it must be admitted that they were choked and dammed and abandoned and horribly vandalled (for building purposes) until the French occupation.

Although the park, with its casino and theatre, is French in feeling and in enterprise, the Arabs seem to find it good, for every evening before prayer-hour the place is dotted about with white-robed figures. The big restaurant is only opened at the end of May, for the hot weather season, when Mohammed says it is very

popular. The wealthy French and Arabs sit up here in the cool night air until very late. I saw a few Arab women, for the greater part quite old and fat, driving in the park in shoddy carriages with the usual wooden shutters for windows. I suppose they imagined they were enjoying the fresh air! What a striking contrast they presented to the slim Arab youths, as agile as deer, who seem to spring over the ground, scarcely touching it with their feet.

A lovely trio walked in front of us up the hill to the sunset point. One was a half-caste nigger in a Mohammedan green jebba striped with brown silk. The black tassel of his red fez reached far below his shoulders; his spotted stockings were set off to advantage by the brightest lemon-yellow shoes. The second was as swift of foot as Achilles ("Podas Okus," I think, is the proper Homeric term given in the footnote of my translation for this young god). He was the coolest, slimmest, proudest-looking thing you ever saw, with clothes all of the finest, whitest linen except his crimson sash and fez, which had a huge *blue* tassel hanging from it instead of the ordinary black one. The blue tassel had its special meaning, I have no doubt. His slender legs were not spoilt by stockings, though he wore crimson morocco slippers with little high heels like a woman's.

His one hand he had given to the half-caste nigger, who could not but feel honoured, I am sure (although it is highly probable that this slim, sunburnt Achilles lived in some square hole in a whitewashed Arab wall on about four francs a week); his other hand was tightly held by a duck of a little boy who was a precocious miniature of his grown-up companion, only he was gayer and grander, for

he wore a crimson velvet jacket heavily embroidered with gold.

I must own that I should like to be an Arab woman for just one thing—to be the mother of one of these dear little dark-eyed boys. They are such huggable things. And this young Achilles would, I am sure, make a most devout and ardent lover. What songs of Araby he could sing! But it would be forbidden fruit. No Arab woman ought to have a lover—only a husband, chosen for her by her unromantic parents. Yet Mohammed says that these Arab women, who are as a rule totally indifferent to their husbands, merely accepting them as a part of the great inevitable, make the most passionate and truly devoted lovers—that is, when they can get the chance, poor things, for Arab houses were built as fortresses against love and romance. When a woman's husband is *chosen* for her she ought to be allowed a lover as well, don't you think? In Tunis, as in Sicily, men friends become very fond of each other. You constantly meet them, old and young, walking hand in hand, or with arms thrown across each other's shoulders. Having literally no companionship with women, they pay pretty little attentions to each other, just as boys pay to girls in England, and present each other with sweets and flowers and cigarettes.

I notice, too, how much more carefully men shave in the South and East than in England, or in other northern countries. An ordinary hard-working Arab man would die of shame, I think, if his moustache and hair were not carefully attended to every day and his face as smooth as a girl's. He doesn't wait until Saturday night to "side himself up," as they used to say at home. Perhaps this

By the Waters of Carthage

is one of the customs which have come down to him from the ancient Carthaginians, for the Phœnician razors are amongst the most lovely things in the museum at the Bardo. They are shaped like flamingos, and exquisitely chased. It seems a pity there is so little legitimate romance in a land where men are so lover-like and beautiful.

There is one dear prince in disguise, all brown limbs and white tatters, who toils across the square in front of my hotel all day long; on his spare, lean back a huge white amphora-shaped vase of terra-cotta rests on the ragged ends of his white burnous. This is his one and only garment, and he ties it over his head with a thick black rope as a protection from the sun.

He is, I suppose, taking water *from* somewhere *to* somewhere, a labour which never ceases; but he is beautiful, and unquestionably a gentleman.

We sat in the Belvedere, Mohammed and I, and watched the sun set over the city. We could see everything from that high point; not one tassel of "The White Burnous" was missing. Mohammed pointed it all out to me, the geography of the land, I mean, which I did not tell him, poor man, would not remain in my head five minutes. He knew every minaret, every dome, every cape and mountain peak by name. It is from this position that you can really see the beauty of the Bay of Tunis, which some writers have gone so far as to say rivals the Bay of Naples. That is a little absurd, for Palermo Bay, though it is not at all pretentious in this respect, is, I think, far lovelier than Tunis. If it wasn't for the associations and the historical sentiment which the great old names call up, I don't think anyone would say the Bay of Tunis, which of course

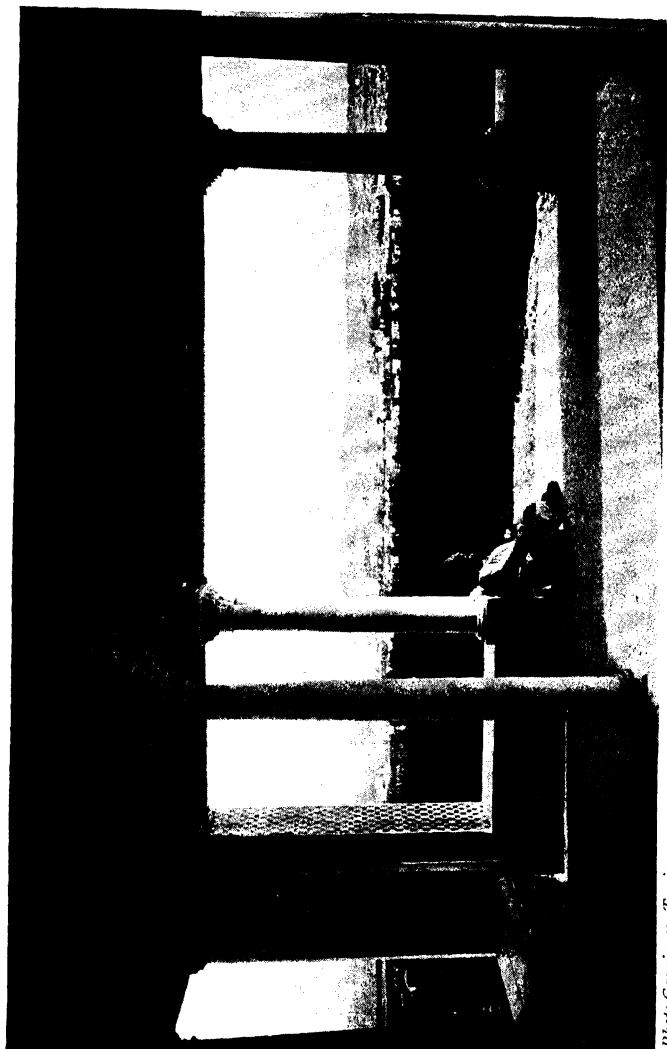


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE SUMMER-HOUSE IN THE BELVEDERE—VIEW OF TUNIS

[To face p. 224

embraces the Gulf of Carthage, was the most beautiful bay in the world. But as this has been asserted by certain writers, you may imagine how very fine it is.

The Belvedere itself is exquisite. Its arabesqued roofs and walls, which are copied from the great statuary hall at the Bardo, have the most delicate and Oriental appearance, for they are closely studded with pieces of brilliantly hued glass which sparkle like precious jewels. Rubies and sapphires and emeralds flash from the mesh-holes of the lace-work, until you say to yourself: "This French Belvedere is the most fantastically beautiful thing in Tunis." But this is what I say about everything, you will remark; each thing is the most beautiful until I have seen the next.

It is well to pay a visit to its modern Arabian pleasure-house, of which the Tunisians are so justly proud, so as to assure yourself that the Moorish art of arabesquing in plaster is not dead.

How beautiful the building must be on the hot summer nights, when fireflies fill the air and stars light up the heavens! I can imagine no more perfect weather than we are having at present, but I always like to see a warm place in its really warm weather. I like to see it undress itself and abandon itself to the indulgence of wanton warmth. In May the mornings are really hot, I suppose; but the air is so exhilarating that one doesn't feel it, and every afternoon a breeze springs up from the sea which necessitates a light wrap for the outdoor cafés after dinner.

While I was watching the fire fade out of the heavens I couldn't help thinking of *la petite Belge* and Monsieur

Ajeeb. What is going to be the end of it? How far will she really play the game? And where *is* Jack?

I have not seen him for two days, and when I ask Mohammed about him, he gives his head that ancient throw back and closes his eyes. I never knew anyone so difficult as Mohammed if you wish him to tell you something which he thinks it is wiser for you not to know.

He has admitted, however, that Madame Ajeeb is still in Tunis, and that her movements are being carefully watched.

He did not tell me, but I feel pretty sure that the German "waddler" who took me over Monsieur Amour's harem is having a well-paid finger in the pie.

* * * * *

When I got back to the hotel I sent Bachir of the many smiles with a note to la petite Belge to ask her to go with me to see the Jewish dancers. I was determined to make a complete Hebrew day of it, but I got back the following very characteristic answer :—

"Chère amie, I have seen the Jewish dancers once, and that is quite sufficient. Do not take your English friend with you, or you will use up all your pretty blushes. With only natives one does not mind so much. If my Jean had not slept all the time, I should have been very red with shame."

Even this advice, coming from whom it did, did not prepare me for the ugliness or grossness of the whole thing.

After dinner I saw Jack in the hall as I was passing out, but I did not invite him to go with me. He seemed very preoccupied, and was in earnest conversation with an important-looking Jew.

The tram stopped just in front of the dancing hall, which presented anything but an Eastern appearance. It was kept by an Italian, I fancy, for it was a gay Neapolitan who took my shilling as I passed in. Two or three young Arabs and Jews left the tram when we did, and followed me into the hall. They were elegantly dressed and gaily slippered, and were, I supposed, great dudes, for they paid the full price and sat in the front seats.

The hall, which was the shape of a chapel, was filled with small tables and chairs, and at the far end there was a narrow and high platform.

I was the only woman in the audience, which consisted of a mixture of all the races which go to make up this strange city of Tunis—Arabs, Moors, half-caste niggers, Maltese, French and Italians, all of course speaking Arabic. The dancing had not yet begun, and I must admit that I felt slightly embarrassed as I walked up the centre of the hall and took the chair which Mohammed had selected for me at an unoccupied table.

The young Moors and Jews who had left the tram with us waited until I was seated, and then immediately chose a table directly opposite to ours. I expect they were anxious to watch how the performance affected me. Shocking indeed it must have been to their sense of womanly modesty that I should be there at all, even if it had been for a prayer-meeting. I know that Mohammed's grave eyes were also watching me as I took my first look at the women-musicians who were seated on a row of chairs pushed close against the wall at the back of the platform; some of them were sitting in the ordinary European fashion with their enormous trousered legs

dangling down from very high chairs, others were squatting on their feet on the chairs, in Turkish fashion.

When my eyes met Mohammed's he gave his little smile which I now know means so much.

He, poor man, had advised me *not* to go. His long intimacy with things European and the many months out of each year which he spends in the companionship of English women and men have quite altered his Oriental tastes and standards of female beauty. But he is still Eastern enough to be horribly shocked, and rightly too, I think, at the French dancers and comic-song singers in the French casino in French Tunis. I watched a group of Arabs the other night when the *première danseuse* came on, but I couldn't discover by their faces what they thought of so shamelessly uncovered a woman. Here, however, it was not the scantiness of the women's dresses which shocked your senses, it was their appalling fatness and the sensuality of their expressions. Such monstrosities of feminine grossness I never could have imagined, even at a Jewish fair. They were dressed in the ordinary voluminous Jewish fashion, trousered to their ankles, and short shoulder-jackets, but without their street vestments of white silk.

You know, dear, what very fat women we have both seen at fairs in Sicily; well, they were as *nothing* compared with these abnormal creatures.

Of course I never imagined that they were the dancers—how could such beings dance? I thought they were the musicians who were amusing the audience until the dancers appeared, for they were beating away on the now familiar green, vase-shaped drums, and humming, in the queerest and *vilest* way you can imagine. Their strange and oddly

suggestive music was supposed to rouse their feelings ; it certainly had a curious fire and passion of its own, which had its effect on the audience. While they crooned or hummed, their fish-like mouths were wide open all the time. The sound came from the backs of their throats. The tum-tumming of the drum and this suppressed humming went on for a very long time ; it reminded me of the snake-charmers' orchestra, only these heavy women seemed to be even more lethargic than the captive and poisonous snakes of the desert. There was one particularly ugly one at the end of the row who made me feel ill to look at her. Now and again one of them would rise slowly from her seat and help herself to a glass of water which had been placed by the manager on a little table in front of them.

The Italian family who evidently owned this paying concern (the hall was well filled) had entered the building by a small door near the platform, apparently from their kitchen, for they brought with them a waft of garlic and many toothpicks. They sat down at a big table near their private exit, with the intention of making a night of it. There were three little girls in the party, none of them over or under thirteen I should say. If nothing more objectionable took place in the performance, it was bad enough that these children should be allowed to see such women.

Some of them I shall never forget ! I assure you that the most depraved creature who haunts Leicester Square when the music halls are emptying at night would look a saint if she stood up beside one of those Jewish dancers.

It seemed the correct thing for offerings of flowers to

be laid on the little tables in front of them, for every now and then a young Moor or a Jew would call a waiter and give him a fine carnation or rose to lay on the altar before his Venus.

"When are the dancers coming, Mohammed?" I asked. "I am very tired of these fat musicians."

"They are the dancers, madame," he said, with that rare twinkle of amusement in his eyes. "You will not find dancers here like the Arab dancers in Mr Hichens' book."

I had hoped, I must admit, for a second Irena—Irena with the features narrow and pointed, Irena with her tiny bones and slender body. I remembered how Mr Hichens likened her to "a stick crowned with a human face, and hung with brilliant draperies." "Irena was an Arab, I suppose, and these are Jewesses. But why don't they begin?" I said.

"They will start soon," he said. "Look, they grow restless, and you must not expect much movement; there is more suggestion than action in all Eastern dancing. It is not like the French ballet."

I smiled. "Not much resemblance, I imagine. Just think of these human hippopotami pirouetting on their toes in white ballet-skirts."

Mahommed touched me on the arm. It is his favourite way of calling my attention.

The biggest and fattest of them all had risen from her chair and was standing in front of the platform, slowly blowing herself out. I held my breath for the final explosion! It was awful, dear! I cannot tell you *how* awful. I longed to kill her. While she expanded in the most

alarming manner she turned gradually round and round from side to side without moving her fat little feet. Her enormous trousers of bright blue satin, which were loose to the ankles, seemed to be filling out with flesh like a balloon slowly filling out with gas, while the part of the figure which is always covered with a striped vest (the part from her waist to her throat) rose and fell as though she was exercising every muscle in her body separately. Her flesh positively leapt.

I hope I kept the horror I felt moderately well concealed, and Mohammed looked into his wine-cup.

Suddenly the thought flashed across me that *this* was the famous "*danse d-ventre*," which I believe you have seen in Paris!

Her stomach was certainly the only part of her body which made the least pretension to dancing, and it was horrible! I wondered what more was going to happen and how soon I could make my flight without offending the sensibility of these Orientals, who evidently thought it beautiful, or something which pleased them more than mere beauty, for when she sat down there were long, deep-drawn breaths of delight and many more offerings of flowers. Oh, Mr Hichens! I could have cursed *The Garden of Allah* and its author at the moment.

Now I understood why the dancing-stage was so narrow and small; standing-room was all that was necessary for these twenty-stone impostors.

I never was more bitterly disappointed in all my days of sightseeing, for nothing more happened. I didn't want anything more that was vile to happen, but just something. "This is silly and dull," I said to Mohammed. "Do you

think we shall see anything more interesting if I stay a little longer?"

"You will see *more*, certainly, for only one out of the seven women has danced yet, but interesting——!" he shrugged his shoulders and closed his eyes, "I do not know; you can do as you feel inclined, but by twelve o'clock to-night the room will not be as it is now!"

"Why, it is only about nine-forty-five now," I said; "will these men sit and look at that sort of thing all the time?"

"Time is nothing to them," he said, "they like to linger over their pleasures; but I think it would not interest you, for they will become more and more enthusiastic."

Visions of these stately Moors and patriarchal-looking Jews really roused to enthusiasm gave me a momentary desire to stay and sit it out; but I could see from my chaperon's face that it was not possible, that these "wreckers," as St Augustine would have called them, were far from desirous of my presence. They wished to paint the town red, so to speak, without the restricting presence of an unbeliever.

And the Jewesses themselves felt, I am sure, that my personality was not sympathetic, for when the mountainous beauty was blowing herself out, as if she had got a bicycle-pump down her throat, the leering glances with which she accompanied the contortions of her breasts and stomach changed to scowls when she met my unadmiring gaze. She looked like a murderess.

The young Jews and Arabs who were at the table opposite to me derived, I am sure, much more amusement, though they were too well-bred to show it,

from my tell-tale face than pleasure from the performance.

I didn't wait to see which of the black-browed houris was next inspired, or with what part of her body she meant to dance; I rose quickly from my seat and managed to get out of the hall somehow.

These Jewesses are not women, they are nothing but fat—poor unashamed and degraded wretches. In Tunis, *Arab* women are not allowed to dance in public except in Ramadhan (for this, one respects the Arab, even if jealousy be his only motive), so the Jewesses have stepped in and learned the dances of their Mohammedan sisters. I can't believe that any Arab woman could look as disgusting as these Tunisian Jewesses look, but I am not able to judge what their interpretation of the same dance might be like: unseemly too, I imagine—for the performance has but one *raison d'être*—but I fancy not so inartistic and unredeemably ugly.

* * * * *

I saw the merry Mabrucka in the square to-day. She was prowling about like a black cat. She was there in the early morning, she was there again when I looked out from my bedroom window when I was dressing after lunch, and she was again there at dinner-time. These Bedouins generally haunt the bazaars and the city in the mornings only, and get back again to their tents at midday. So her presence made me curious.

Mabrucka was evidently bent on some private business of her own, for her deeds were stealthy, and she was quite alone with her little baby. She didn't see me. She is still without jewels.

By the Waters of Carthage

Do you know, dear, that I can count my days in Tunis on one hand ; very soon we will be together again and then I will be able to tell you everything instead of writing about them in my rambling breathless manner.

Yours lovingly,

DORIS.

CHAPTER XII

TUNIS, May 19—.

DEAREST,

How can I write to you of Carthage? I have been there, I have bowed my modern head before her eternity and desolation.

The bigness of the moment was overwhelming—worse perhaps, if possible, than my first day in Rome, for Rome had at least creaking hinges in my memory, whilst Carthage was only visionary and infinite. In Carthage, imagination must be a master-builder.

The first thing that strikes you when you stand on the actual soil of Carthage is the *nothingness* of everything. This nothingness is terrible, yet while it is facing you in its naked truth you are conscious of the immortality of every inch of the ground—not a footstep but has its archaeological value, not a spot that has not its seal in history.

So little is there to be seen of Carthage that the yellow neck of land seems to exist only for the Memorial Church to St Louis, which crowns the site of the Byrsa at one end, and the little white tower at the other end which lights the sailors of France from the very hill which lit the sailors of Carthage in the days of Hannibal. Yet, dear, is there a piece of land on God's earth which, for its size, holds as much that is historical, as much that went towards the progress of mankind, as this parched strip on the shores of North Africa? It is hard to realise that this narrow yellow peninsula was once the world's nursery for learning, for

art, for science, and for commerce. It was from this *città morta* in a now Mohammedan land that the first Latin translation of the Old and New Testaments went out into the world. It was from the founders of this city that the world first learned to write with letters.

I feel sure that pilgrimages to the hero cities of the world must do us good—even the most ignorant of us—for here at Carthage you are baptized in the religion of veneration. Here you stand face to face with the immortality of greatness. Here you learn how true it is that nothing ever dies.

“Because of its ancient greatness,” I said to myself; “because of the glory of things which passeth not away, this desolate sun-parched strip of land on the shores of North Africa will ever be a magic name. For the civilised of all nations, Carthage will be Carthage until the world has slipped behind the sea like the ball of fire at sunset.” But the fact that this frankly pagan Carthage—that compelling name which makes every mind soar up and every knee bow down; that name that rings out high over all others, even high above great Rome itself—that it should be a mere ash-heap of builder’s ruins, a mere yellow mound against an horizon of blue, is incredible until you have seen it.

You may read how little there is of the real Carthage (all that the Library of the British Museum contains on the subject), but you will never believe how little until you yourself have stood on her ruins bathed in that African light; until you yourself have felt her desolation. For you, dear, have a Carthage of your own imagining, and what man has not a Helen of Troy?

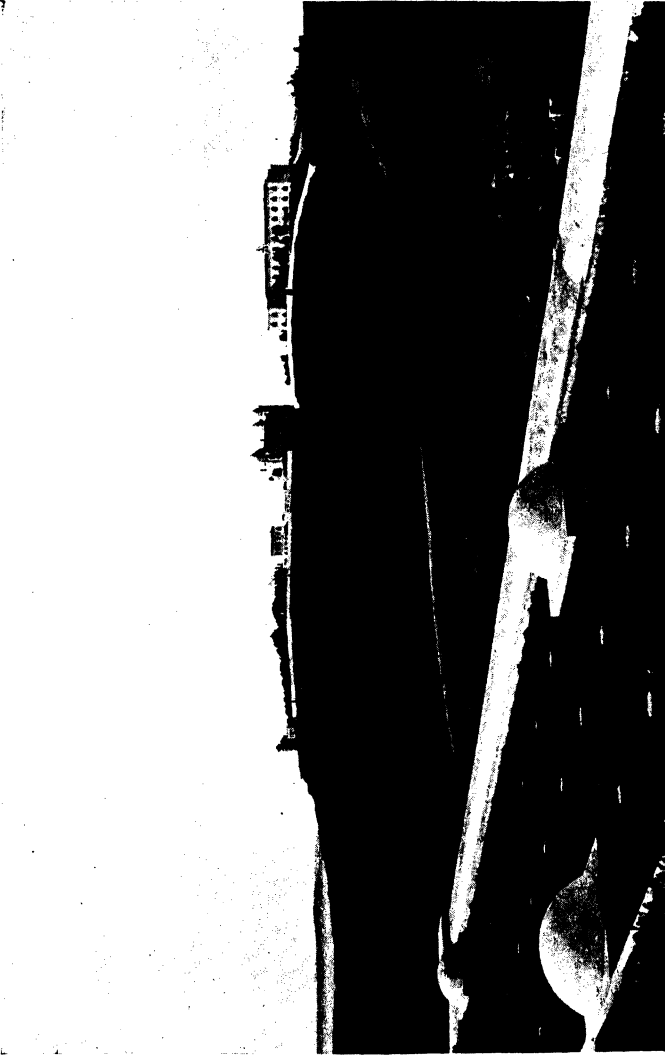


Photo Carrigues, Tunis

THE BYRSA OR CITADEL HILL OF CARTHAGE

[To face p. 236]

Something inside me keeps on saying, "*I have seen Carthage, I have seen Carthage.*"

Then the privilege of the fact faces me, and I ask myself: "But why should *I* have seen Carthage? What freak has the great god Chance played on me, that I, whose knowledge of her story—which holds, but for Troy, the most affecting of all city sieges—goes scarcely deeper than a familiarity with her name, should have been amongst her pilgrims?"

It does seem incredible that I should have gone alone to Carthage—the great Carthage which in one's school-days seemed as far off as death or infinity itself—that I should have visited it with only an Arab guide; and, what is more, that in the actual getting to it, there was no more difficulty or danger than in driving on a bus to Piccadilly.

I went alone, dear (that is to say, with my faithful Mohammed), because I felt that any other companionship might be risky. I could not, try as I might, fit la Belge into the atmosphere. Even in St Louis' brand-new cathedral I think her extreme modernity might have offended. Yet in all probability her modernity would have been better suited to the progressive society of the wealthy and pagan Carthaginians than to the unchanging streets of biblical Tunis to-day. And Jack—"Well," you will say, "there was Jack!"—he of course knows much more about the three Punic wars and the various invasions than I do, and probably he has a very fair grasp of Hannibal's tactics as a general. If I studied Carthaginian history until I passed out, I should never keep the details of these various invasions distinct in my head. Yet Jack has them quite pat—the invasion of Agathocles, the unsuccessful

invasion of Regulus, the invasion of the elder Scipio, the defeat of Hannibal at Zama, the final invasion, the invasion of the Vandals, and the recapture by Belisarius—he rolls them all off his tongue with a glibness that amazes me. I feel convinced, however, that if he had gone with me, and had been able to lift his mind from the one devastating thought which envelops him like a cloud at present, that he would have commenced planning out a golf-course, which he declares is what the peninsula of Carthage was intended for in the original scheme of creation.

Jack has been to Carthage two or three times; he takes the most matter-of-fact interest in exact measurements and in following out the plans given in the museum guide-books. He agrees with the theory which Davis suggests—that the Turkish Fort and the Roman Baths, and not St Louis Hill, were the ancient acropolis of the city. Anyhow, Sidi-Bou-Said is the highest point on the peninsula; it is 393 feet above sea-level, which makes it 205 feet higher than St Louis Hill.

Quite unaffected by the sentiment and the passion of romance which this *città morta* quickens in one, he has spent long hours working out the problem of the underground stabling for three hundred elephants and four thousand horses, besides lodgings for twenty thousand infantry and four thousand cavalry which were actually built inside the three famous walls which surrounded the citadel. He declares that this alone makes the supposed site of the Byrsa impossible. St Louis Hill is not large enough.

If only some undeniable portion of the walls could be discovered, what doubts would be laid at rest!—or some indisputable indication of the three famous streets which

held the six days' fighting when Scipio and his army forced their way up from the harbours to the citadel.

I of course know nothing about these things, but somehow I feel that St Louis Hill is by the nature of things the fitting position for the citadel of the city. Added to which the double harbours lie much nearer to it than to Cape Carthage, so that the streets which led up to it would have been shorter and more direct.

But with Jack all these examinations are carried out in the most cold-blooded way. He is not "intoxicated with Carthage," as Mohammed was with God; the wine of her story has not gone to his head—but like a soldier he is wildly interested in her military history.

I wonder if the saying that "everything that is hidden will be brought to light" applies to Carthage? Will she, too, gradually be compelled to give up her story?

* * * * *

There are certain things about Carthage which I, a mere woman, could feel and perfectly understand. When Jack stood, for instance, on the site of the Temple of Æsculapius (the Romans' Temple of Healing), he vexed his practical man's mind about that blessed stabling, while I found myself repeating words which I thought I had long ago forgotten, but which somehow had lived in my subconscious memory and at the psychological moment leapt out to grace the situation: they were the words of the wife of the traitor Asdrubal—the words which she spoke to Scipio as she looked down upon him from the exalted height of the burning temple, where she and nine hundred faithful citizens were proudly waiting for their death.

"To thee, O Roman, I wish nothing but prosperity,

By the Waters of Carthage

for these acts are conformable to the laws of war. But I beseech thee, as well as the gods of Carthage, to punish that Asdrubal as he deserves for having betrayed his country, his gods, his wife, and children."

"Perfidious wretch, thou most wicked of all mankind. This fire is about to devour me and my children; but thou, great captain of Carthage, for what triumph art thou not reserved, what punishment? Will he not make thee suffer at whose feet I now see thee?"

One can imagine that wife of Asdrubal surrounded by her maids and matrons, weaving bowstrings for the faithful soldiers from the tresses of their beautiful hair.

But there, I have written already far into the night; even the Sicilians in the Rue d'Église have ceased talking, so that shows it is long past the hour of the dog, and so far I have told you nothing of the real Carthage. Yet after all what did I see at Carthage but a long yellow mound of land with St Louis' white cathedral rising up at one end, and the holy village of Sidi-Bou-Said crowned by a lighthouse at the other, and everywhere over land and sea that amazing African light!

Good-night.

Yours,

DORIS.

CHAPTER XIII

TUNIS, May 19—.

DEAREST,

Strange things are happening. I wanted to finish all that I had to tell you about Carthage, but what I have heard about Jack must come first. The Jew with whom I saw him talking the other night had some very important news to tell him. It appears that he is acting as a sort of go-between with Monsieur Ajeeb and Jack. Madame Ajeeb has left Tunis, and Jack is distracted. At the same time things are not so hopeless as they seem, for the Jew conveyed the information, very tactfully, that Monsieur Ajeeb wishes to divorce Sylvia because she is childless, and that he is only refraining from doing so because the law compels him to let her take her marriage-portion (the sum he settled on her at her marriage) with her; and Monsieur Ajeeb has no money to spare at the present time, so he prefers sending her to Gafsa to stagnate and perhaps die of ennui.

When I said to Jack, "How *awful* for poor Sylvia," he said, "Good God! don't you see this is her chance? He has taken good care that the gossip should reach my ears; he means that if Sylvia will take her *cong  * without demanding any consolation money, and if I will pay the expenses of the court, that he will proceed with the business at once. It is merely a case of *   s. d.*"

"And what have you done about it?" I asked.

"I told the Jew that I would not only gladly pay all

the expenses of the case, but that I would write a cheque for double the amount. I will, in fact, offer the beast a bait which he will not refuse. But I have stipulated that it is to be on one condition only, and this is that Madame Ajeeb never knows to whom she was indebted for her freedom."

And it is *here*, dearest, that my part of the business comes in. Sylvia is to come home to England as my guest—that is, if all goes as Jack anticipates—a perfectly free woman; and under your eyes Jack can finish the rest of his wooing.

I have promised him this, dear, because I couldn't help it, and because I'm sure that Sylvia, if he wins her, will make him the sweetest and gentlest wife in the world. But she must be perfectly independent to take him or reject him as she chooses. I am the only person to whom she is to feel the least indebted.

Of course one never really knows what these Orientals *will* do; how true is the saying that "only Allah knows the Arab."

To bring home to you the real Orientalism of the place, I will tell you a little incident which happened in this outwardly civilised Tunis only a few years ago. An English lady was reading peacefully in her garden one day, when suddenly something was thrown over the wall and fell at her feet. It was a beautiful white arm, slender and smooth-skinned. On the fingers there were costly rings, and on the wrist heavy Eastern bracelets. The incident ends here, for neither time nor curiosity ever revealed the beginning or the end of the story.

La petite Belge I have not seen, but apparently she



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE ENTRANCE TO A RICH ARAB'S HOUSE IN THE MEDINA

[To face p. 242

continues to play the game. The more I see of the East, the more I feel that the Prophet did not do what he might have done for Mohammedan women. In his teaching he denounced polygamy, yet he himself had nine wives; they all lived in a row of little white houses divided from one another by palm branches—the Prophet's harem, in fact.

"The toothless old woman" is what Ayisha used to call the faithful Khadijah, which does not speak well for the nature of the beautiful young wife of his old age—the wife who was only twenty years old when Mohammed died.

Yet his moral reformation was colossal, and his influence for good almost unbounded. This makes me feel that the blot on his reformation is the degraded position of all Mohammedan women. Yet "he did for the East what Christianity never could have done, and never will do," so we must leave the enfranchisement of women for the second prophet. Christ was the greatest of all the prophets in Mohammed's eyes, and therefore intensely revered by his followers. For the real Christ who is yet to come a tomb is kept in readiness by the side of the Prophet's at Mecca.

I will post this very short letter without continuing my Carthage pilgrimage, because it contains news of Jack. I can't write more at present, for this is Monday, and Mohammed is waiting to take me to the tomb of Lella Manouba, the popular woman saint of Tunis, so I will do no more than pray that "His sun-like image" may bless you and keep you safe till my return.

Yours,
DORIS.

P.S.—"The fate of every man is about his neck"; that is what Mohammed said when I told him that I wished Jack had never come to Tunis. Poor Mohammed. When I tell him that Madame Ajeeb may eventually come to live with me in England, I am afraid he will insist on coming too!

CHAPTER XIV

TUNIS, May 19—.

MY DEAR HUSBAND,

I went to Carthage again this afternoon, and I mean to go again to-morrow, and on to-morrow's morrow as well, and on the day after that again, for Carthage burns into one's very soul. How such nothingness can be so compelling I don't know.

I thought when I went there for the first time that Christian Carthage—the Carthage of St Cyprian and St Augustine—would be uppermost in my thoughts because of St Louis' Christian monument and the big establishment of the White Fathers which rather usurp the stage. But somehow they faded out of my imagination when I actually stood on the ruins of Dido's city.

I didn't think of poor, pious St Monica, but rather of the goddess Astarte, who, as a token of her sovereignty, wore a bull's head with wide horns as her diadem, and of her great temple known in later times as the Temple of Cœlestis, where the most *unholy* festivals were held. These horns of Astarte are the very self-same horns which, painted upon houses to-day in Tunis, are the tokens of returned pilgrims from Mecca. But there is nothing left of the splendid Via Cœlestis and its richly decorated walls adorned with pagan mosaics and precious stones, or of the most outstanding of all the vast temples of Carthage—Æsculapius.

In fact, almost all that is above ground in Carthage to-day is Roman—the fragments of that vast city which

built itself on the ruins of the greater Phœnician Carthage. But to me at least these are not so interesting as the underground excavations which belong to the "ubiquitous, irrepressible Phœnicians," as Bosworth Smith has termed them. The great reservoirs and the double harbours are of course Phœnician, and the endless cave-like tombs which now form ideal dwellings for Bedouins. I could not but feel, as I wandered about these Phœnician excavations, how history was repeating itself. Now, again, there are Jews in North Africa usurping all the trade and commerce and making themselves the financial masters of the situation. And they have but come into their own again, for "these ubiquitous, irrepressible Phœnicians" *were* Jews—or were they only one of the Semitic races, I am not quite sure? What Freeman says about them is splendid :

"They are set before us as a bitter, gloomy race, obedient to rulers, harsh to subjects, most ignoble in their panic fears, most savage in their anger, abiding in their purpose, taking no pleasure in joy or grace. We thus see the Semitic nature in all its fullness, a nature which never puts forth its full strength till the strength of any other people would have given way. . . . Her policy was to save the blood of her citizens as no state ever did, and to fight her wars by the arms of men paid to risk their lives for the sole interest of their paymasters." Perhaps even then Tunis, which is an older Phœnician settlement than Carthage, had its Jewish usurers and traders just as it has to-day.

When these Phœnicians were in the zenith of their power they had no high dreams of patriotism, and no loyalty—hard cash was ever their god. "When their ships were to be

found in every known and unknown sea"—I am again quoting, but this time it is from my most invaluable Bosworth Smith—"in the days of its greatest prosperity, the Phœnician people of the Syrian coast (their original home) remained content with a narrow strip of feeble country squeezed in between the mountains and the sea, some thirty miles broad, and only a single mile wide."

How very closely history, even if it is only legendary history in both instances, has repeated itself in the story that is told of how the French, before their complete occupation of Tunis, first measured out the site for the cathedral of St Louis on the hill of the ancient Byrsa. It strongly reminds me of that classic tape-measure of bulls' hide, for it is said that a *fortress*, not a cathedral, was in their mind at the time, and that the measurements were marked out accordingly.

Although the Phœnicians do not fascinate me as a people, it was none the less Phœnician Carthage which I saw pictured like a mirage on my brain—the Carthage which the widowed Dido founded one hundred and ten years before ever Romulus begat Rome. I found that the legendary romances of the history had stamped themselves pretty indelibly on my mind. I could see the Trojan hero telling the beautiful queen his fine story of Troy, of how the city was lost for the beauty of one fair woman, until all that was human and all that was feminine in that forlorn queen leapt up and made her once more merely a loving and tender woman. Æneas all too successfully stirred her passions and sympathies.

I pictured them sitting together, the beautiful queen and the god-like hero, gazing on the incomparable beauty

which surrounded the new-born city, the soaring peaks of Bou-Cornein (the father of two horns), the glorious Bay of Tunis changing from azure blue to blushing pink by the passing of flamingos. Again I can see this legend revived by Dante when Paolo reads aloud to Francesca the story of Launcelot and Queen Guinevere!

I put aside all cold-blooded arguments about dates which upset this pretty story, and accepted Virgil's word for it. What does it really matter if he makes Æneas describe the power of Akragas (our beloved Girgenti) and Gela and lots of other Sicilian strongholds to the Phœnician queen long before those cities ever existed? As the son of Aphrodite, I think he could have done even more than that if he had chosen. These cold-blooded analyses of Virgil's great story are not the things that bother me, but the perplexing way in which Phœnician deities change from masculine to feminine, and from gods to queens or kings, just as fancy pleases them. You no sooner get the great Dido well established in your mind as a solid human being, worthy of our most human sympathies, the sister of Pygmalion, who fled to Libya and founded the city of Carthage, than you meet her as a goddess who was worshipped for just as long as the city of Carthage lasted. She was, in fact, the patron goddess of all Phœnician races. Dido means "the beloved," and comes from the same root as the Hebrew name David.

But I prefer to think of her as a human queen, the tragic and suffering daughter of Tyrian kings. For this allows a woman to be the foundress of one of the greatest of all cities. I like to think of Carthage as a woman's city, founded by a woman and defended by a woman in the last

hour of its downfall. If we reject Virgil's story because he allowed Æneas too wide a margin of poetic licence, we wipe off one of the most human and moving tragedies from the mirrors of our minds.

The exiled woman whose husband was so brutally murdered by her jealous brother was just learning to accept the compensation which the gods offered to her, when Æneas made his abrupt appearance. In place of a husband she had a crown and a city; ambition was to satisfy all her desires and to heal her torn heart. But Fate had more tragedies in store for her. Love was the enemy that was now to attack her fortress—love the destroyer, love the all-powerful. Man-like, it was not until “pious Æneas” had accepted her complete surrender, not until he had drained his own cup of passion to the dregs, that he awoke to the sense of his duty, that he realised what destiny had shaped him for. What was a noble woman's broken heart compared to this Trojan hero's belief in his own future greatness? He was reserved for better things than the mere keeping of vows and the uniting of Trojan and Tyrian under one sceptre.

* * * * *

And then this horned Astarte. One moment we know her as the moon-goddess, the consort of Baal-Moloch, the sun-god (that was her original position), and the next as Tanit, her Carthaginian Semitic form. Then we find all three forms amalgamated in Cœlestis, who gave her name to one of the great divisions of Carthage. Astarte, when she was in one of her milder moods, was the goddess of wedded love and of peaceful husbandry; and this you must bear in mind when you suddenly come across her as

the goddess of war, in which aspect she got identified in the Roman mind with Minerva, and because, I suppose, of her bearing towards husbandry, also with Ceres. But it was her eventual incorporation with Venus which suited her best of all.

Classical history to me is very like the Bible, dear, in the difficulty I have in distinguishing between good and evil, the clean and the unclean! Queen Dido's suicide and her lover's dastardly desertion of her have in no way detracted from the fair fame of the pious Æneas. And in the Bible we are asked to accept Jael, the wife of Heber, as a woman worthy of our admiration. Yet I scarcely think you would find a meaner act than this in all history—welcoming her enemy as her guest, and while he was asleep nailing his head down to the floor! It takes a lot of beating.

At Mohammed's suggestion we had employed a young Arab who was one of the licensed guides recognised by the museum authorities. He really seemed to know every inch of the ground, and to love it. He had worked for some years with the excavators, and had treasured up a strange store of archæological information which he gave out in the quaintest way as quite his own. I never saw a human being so free-limbed and light of foot. Of course he had charming manners—what Arab has not?—and that simple hauteur of one who has equals, but no superiors.

His indolent alertness—so characteristic of the Arab, and which is so suggestive of a hidden fire—and his archæological enthusiasm gave me great pleasure. His glib familiarity with the Phœnician and Roman and early Christian history of the place was really astonishing, it sat so lightly on his brown limbs. This scholar Arab's costume

—which consisted of three parts only, as far as I could see, a thick white linen shirt, worn as a jebba, a pair of scarlet morocco slippers, and a red fez—seemed so exactly suited to the atmosphere of the place that he was worth his money for scenic effect alone. What a creature of earth and air and sun he was—the very essence of freedom. Mohammedans are as a rule a solemn, almost austere, people, who have a solemn, austere God. There is nothing of the ancient pagan light-heartedness about them. But this youth was an exception. He might have taken part in the pagan dances in the Temple of Cœlestis, and paid his tribute to the horned Astarte.

As evening advanced, I noticed that he grew slightly restive. I questioned Mohammed, who explained that he had an appointment with a Bedouin beauty, with whom he was very much in love. When Mohammed told me this his eyes twinkled. "What amuses you so much?" I said. "It seems a very natural state of affairs." "I was amused, madame," he said, "to think how amused *you* would be if you could only understand his descriptions of her charms." "How old is he?" I asked; "is he going to marry her?"

Mohammed gave his suggestive shrug. "He is nineteen next month, and she is just fifteen—the most preferred age of a Bedouin woman. He says she is more beautiful and more satisfying than any woman whom he has ever loved. But she is already the promised bride of one of the sons of her chief; she has to meet him by great stealth, dressed as an Arab woman and veiled."

"Let him go, Mohammed," I said; "I couldn't keep two such children of nature waiting. What is her name?"

"Azeezeh."

"Azeezeh!" I said; "that means 'dear,' does it not? The story of Azeezeh and Azeez is one of my favourites in *The Arabian Nights*."

"It has the same meaning to-day with Arabs."

"Do you remember the verse that Azeez was told by his cousin to repeat to Azeezeh?" I asked, "and how he forgot to repeat it, the first time when she came upon him in the middle of his slumbers, accompanied by ten female slaves? There was little wonder, for the lovely Azeezeh appeared like the full moon among the planets; she was attired in a garment of green satin embroidered with gold." I wonder if this most impassioned lover and archæological student has ever repeated the same lines to his Azeezeh, and if she has given him the same answer? No doubt, like most Arabs, he knows every one of the thousand and one stories by heart. This is how the dialogue would go.

The white-shirted, brown-legged Arab addressing his lover: "O ye lover of Allah, inform me how a youth should act when his love is intense."

The Bedouin beauty: "He should hide his love and conceal his secret, and be patient under every event, and submissive."

The brown-legged Arab: "He hath sought to attain a becoming patience, but found nought save a heart pining with desire."

The Bedouin beauty: "Then if he have not patience to conceal his secret, I know nothing better for him than death."

* * * * *

I paid Azeez well—too well, I know ; but surely such beauty has its claims, and is also worth its hire. The four francs extra which I gave him were not for his services as a guide, but as my little offering to Venus, who had smiled on this Arab boy and graced him with her favours.

But to return to Carthage. I think it is rather splendid, dear, to think that of our beloved Girgenti, which Carthage in her zenith utterly devastated, there should be still standing far more to commemorate her greatness than there is of all Carthage. Those glorious temples, immemorial monuments of her fame, stand up in their loneliness and majesty as nothing stands up of Hannibal's Carthage to-day. Those mighty homes of mysterious pagan deities do bring before us the greatness of the men who built "splendour-loving Akragas." And in Sicily, out of all the Phœnician settlements, what is there left for us to admire? Scarcely a thing. It is only history, and not what we see, which tells us that Palermo (the ancient Panormas) was a Phœnician city. Freeman says the thing most symbolic of Phœnician presence in the island is the fallen Olympian at Akragas.

At Carthage, in the meaningless debris of colossal stones and eternal masonry, there is no Forum or Colosseum or Via Sacra as there is at Rome ; no acropolis crowned with a temple like the Parthenon at Athens ; no vast theatre or street of tombs like that street of the dead and that sunken theatre at Syracuse.

In fact, I can call up no complete picture of any building except the Christian basilica, which I pictured to myself (probably incorrectly) as having held in its pulpit the great St Augustine or St Cyprian. *It* is vast, and

impressive, and I should think must have been as big as St Peter's at Rome. The amphitheatre, which is not very imposing, lies near the railway station, outside the city. It holds the little Chapel of St Cyprian and the cross which marks the spot where he was martyred. Here also St Perpetua and St Felicitas were to be tossed to death by a wild cow; but after the cow had gored them, the audience demanded to see the girl martyrs butchered by gladiators.

Of course there are endless Punic tombs and cisterns and large pieces of Punic masonry, but nothing which creates a picture in one's mind. Strangely enough it is from her tombs that we are gradually reading her story. Did the Romans overlook these particular tombs, I wonder, when they so faithfully carried out Cato's prayer, "Delenda est Carthago"? or did they listen, more than history has credited them with having done, to the pathetic appeal of Hanno, the Carthaginian legate? "Kill," he replied to the Roman consul who cruelly ordered the Carthaginians to destroy their beloved city and build another ten miles from the coast—"Kill, if it be your good pleasure, all the citizens, but spare the city, spare the temples of the gods, spare the tombs of the dead. The dead at least can do you no harm; let them receive the honours that are due to them."

Commissioners were sent out from Rome with orders to destroy all that remained of the Carthage which the young Scipio had razed to the ground. It was to be utterly eradicated. They certainly pillaged the necropolis, but did they spare or overlook these endless tombs of the dead—who can say? To their neglect or reverence, whichever it may be, what a debt of gratitude we owe! And

how little they thought, these proud Romans, that northern barbarians, more than a thousand years afterwards, would be finding in these tombs far more precious relics of Phœnician Carthage than there are of the Roman Carthage to tell the tale of her triumph.

For even Athens has not given us a more beautiful sarcophagus than the Phœnician coffin which bears the figure of a priestess of Tanit on its lid. The humanity and soft beauty of that Phœnician figure are wonderful. She is as beautiful as Helen of Troy, and far more gracious (to me at least) than the world-renowned Arethusa which decorates the decadrachm of Euænetus (the most famous of all Sicilian coins), which was struck by the Syracusans to commemorate the defeat of the Athenians. And the husband of the priestess—he is well worthy to be her mate. He is as gentle and kind in aspect as St Joseph himself, but more strikingly handsome. What a splendid couple they must have made when they worshipped together in the great temple of Tanit!

You must remember that not only was Phœnician Carthage razed to the ground by these commissioners from Rome, who took strong measures to enforce upon the people the sort of punishment that was in store for them if they dared to rebuild the city, but Mohammedan fanaticism has for centuries been eagerly smashing and destroying every trace of realistic art which was discovered in the ruins, so it is very surprising that these two human figures should be as perfect to-day as when they left the artist's studio.

And it is in these tombs that we are finding all the little human objects which tell us of the ways and customs

and domestic habits of the Phœnicians. The mirrors of chased bronze, the delicate gold jewellery, the little figures of favourite gods, show us not only that the inspiration of all Phœnician art was either Greek or Egyptian, if the objects were not actually made by Greek hands, but that like other ancient and elemental beings they loved to have their favourite baubles and deities laid close beside them when they took their long sleep. This is human Nature deep to the very heart of her.

Do you remember, dear, that I said in one of my letters that I hoped soon to find out the connection between ostrich-eggs and memorial candles, and that I wondered why they always hung together in the perfumers' shops in the souks? Well, to-day in the Carthage Museum I found that ostrich-eggs are among the many strange things which have been found in the Phœnician tombs. This shows that the custom has been carried on, and that the memorial candles now take the place of the little terra-cotta lamps which are never wanting in ancient tombs. Ostrich-eggs are symbolical of eternity. I also saw necklaces which had been worn by Phœnicians that contained every amulet which adorned Mabruca's neck. Not one was missing—the cowrie shells, the little kidney bean, the protecting eyes, and the lumps of black studded with nails!

* * * * *

As Bosworth Smith so truly remarks, Carthage will never be known to us as Athens and Rome are known, for almost every historical document of Carthage perished.

But it is wonderful how much the students of archæology and of ancient art can read and discover for us in these fragments of ruins. Nothing is too small but that it may

lead to important discoveries and fresh revelations. What we should pass by as merely a female figure of some dancing-girl on a mosaic pavement, they recognise as a priestess, and in course of time they tell us her name.

By the position of her figure on the floor they conclude that she is one of four figures, and that they are dancing before an altar.

And sure enough further excavating proves this to be the case, and at last it is surmised that this mosaic pavement was probably one of the floors of some minor temple which stood within the vast precincts of the Temple of Astarte, and that it was dedicated to the two Carthaginian goddesses Dido and Anna, and to the two female Sicilian deities Ceres and Proserpine.

This pavement, which I have not attempted to describe correctly, was discovered by Mr Davis, the historian and archæologist (or rather I should say by his French *custode*), who ranks among the earliest of the enthusiastic Carthaginian archæologists.

I remember being told when I was in Rome how some excavators digging in the Forum came unexpectedly across a slab of black marble.

To the ordinary mind a slab of black marble in an ocean of fallen marbles would not have signified a revolution in the long-accepted plan of the Forum. But in a measure it did. For this slab of black marble represented a funeral stone, and the funeral stone of some vastly important person. After fierce excitement (for the slab was discovered much below the level of the accepted foundation of the Forum) it was pronounced to be the tomb of no less a personage than Romulus himself. And this being the case, the Via

Sacra and endless other things got terribly out of place. That black stone caused absolute devastation in the Forum for almost two years.

And so it is at Carthage. Theories which have long been accepted by even the German school as certainties are often completely thrown over by the discovery of some apparently insignificant piece of marble bearing a few lines of Punic inscription, or by the discovery of a lower pavement or wall. Three most beautiful mosaic pavements, for instance, were discovered one on the top of another, separated of course by some feet of soil and debris. Imagine the ingenuity and scientific skill which were required for the laying of these pavements open to view without disturbing or spoiling any portion of the three!

There is little wonder that the Arabs and Berbers, who are ruled by superstitions, looked with fear and horror upon the early excavators. For if they had eyes that could see through six feet of solid soil, they must indeed be possessed of supernatural powers!

But *that* is long ago, for our white-shirted Arab was a genuine lover of Carthage and her antiquities. He told me that nothing could ever prove a strong enough temptation to take him from Carthage. He seemed to be on friendly terms with the White Fathers, whom you sometimes meet driving dung-carts or reading their prayers in their strange costume—a white burnous girdled with a rope, and worn as a monk's robe with a red fez! But "Azeez" was no convert, for his attitude when we visited the cathedral was distinctly disdainful.

Personally I think that great white semi-Byzantine building is very beautiful, but I hope Mr Herbert

Vivian will not hear me say so, for his scorn of it is magnificent.

I think it is very Oriental in feeling and marvellously light and pleasing. That it is rich in precious marbles you can well imagine, for its object has touched the feelings of the entire Catholic world. "Les Pères Blancs" are naturally very proud of this memorial to their king and saint, which stands on one of the most famous sites in history—the citadel of Carthage.

On my second day's visit I was determined to begin our big undertaking by starting out, when we left the station, to visit the holy village of Sidi-Bou-Said. Sidi-Bou-Said stands at the Cape Carthage end of the peninsula. I was told that it was a quite unspoiled Arab village. But my principal idea in visiting it was to see at least the exterior of the mosque which the Mohammedans look upon as the tomb of St Louis. Their love for St Louis is astonishing, and so sacred has his name become that this little village dedicated to his memory is to-day the favourite retreat of Tunisian saints. Here, Mr Bosworth Smith tells us, they love to lead a simple, chaste and prayerful existence, studying the Koran and other sacred Mohammedan books, depending on the charity of the faithful for their livelihood, happy in the knowledge that when Allah calls them to Him their bones will be laid to rest alongside of generations of marabouts who have ended their holy lives in this little whitewashed village which holds the tomb of a Christian saint and king.

The village certainly is very Oriental and very completely whitewashed. It has one perfectly charming café which forms the subject of the highly popular post-card

of Sidi-Bou-Said, but the life in the streets and of the people themselves did not seem to me any more purely Arab than one sees in the poor Arab streets in Tunis.

I had grasped the geography of the place well enough to guess that from the top of the lighthouse, which lies beyond the village, nearer Cape Carthage, I should get the whole plan of Carthage stretched at my feet, and that it would necessitate the first fine vigour of unspoilt enthusiasm to do the whole thing—to walk from the lighthouse at one end of the peninsula to the cathedral at the other. At the close of a long day's sightseeing I am afraid I should never have summoned up the energy to visit the spot from which Æneas took his first bird's-eye view of Queen Dido's city, or to walk from end to end of it.

The view from the lighthouse was well worth the walk, for it gives you the complete peninsula from Cape Carthage to the Byrsa.

Lying plainly before you is the full and exquisite coastline, the blue gulf and the Lake of Tunis, the Bay of Carthage, and, best of all, the inner and outer harbours as distinct as on the day they were made by Phœnician hands, though shrunk, of course, since the time when the inner one alone held two hundred and twenty full-sized triremes. Rising up across the enamel of African blue are the twin peaks of Hammam-lif softly veiled in a summer's haze of warmth. And last, but not least in point of picturesque to the Western eye, there is the great plain of Tunis dotted here and there with the white domes of saints' tombs and flat-roofed Arab houses always guarded by the symbols of Africa, the palm-trees.

The popular watering-place of Hammam-lif lies right

under Bou-Cornein, which is in its way the Vesuvius of Tunis. Hammam-lif is a very valuable asset in Tunis's prosperity, with her sulphur-baths and mineral springs, which are, I am told, of immemorial fame. They healed the Romans as they heal the Tunisians to-day.

There is a large Jewish bathing-establishment there, as well as one for native Tunisians and foreigners.

And now, dear, an abrupt farewell to Carthage, for Achmet has just brought me up a note from Jack to ask me if I will come down and speak to him, so good-night. I will end this at once so that it can go by to-morrow's early morning boat.

Your loving wife,

DORIS.

CHAPTER XV

TUNIS, *May 19—.*

DEAREST,

Jack had nothing fresh to tell me, only to groan over his increasing anxiety about Sylvia.

She has disappeared completely. Poor Jack! he suffers horribly, picturing to himself all sorts of Oriental domestic tortures which she may be enduring. Both Mohammed and the waddler have failed to find out anything about her movements.

When la petite Belge questioned Monsieur Ajeeb as to his wife's whereabouts, he simply stated that she was in his house in the country. He evidently does not mean to satisfy Jack's curiosity through her. Still the negotiations about the divorce are going on, with the Jew as a "go-between," and la Belge urges the Moor on by her provoking suggestions of all sorts of future possibilities!

One suggestion is that he should accompany her and her husband to Biskra when they return to Tunis after the hot weather is over. She has not the slightest intention of returning or of ever carrying out any of these future possibilities, but he believes she is in earnest. The love-poems he sends her by the green-jebbaed nigger are marvellous productions of Oriental passion. In their way they are very beautiful. "Moon-faced" is his one metaphor for beauty, of course.

And now, because I have really no more to tell you about Jack's affairs, I will return to Sidi-Bou-Said.

We did not see anything in the village itself which impressed its particular holiness upon us, but from the beautiful loggia of a rather dilapidated and abandoned Arab house we had a superb view of the Sidi-Bou-Said mosque and of the lower part of the village. This Arab house, which you are allowed to visit, must once have been very luxurious. In it Mohammed pointed out the little platform under a high peaked arch which points towards Mecca. This little place set apart for prayer is as necessary to a Mohammedan house as the god-shelf is to a Japanese home. Five times a day it is the prescribed duty of every member of the family to kneel or stand with bowed head and folded hands under this arch with his or her face Mecca-wards.

It is a beautiful idea, for here, for a time at least, all material thoughts are put away and the mind is surrendered to God.

It is like the presence of Our Lady in a Sicilian cottage. She is represented, it is true, only too often by a cheap and highly coloured print, or by a china figure which costs but three soldi, but she is their dear Lady of Compassion all the same. And no home is too poor but to be graced by her presence, and no villain too black but to be whiter by his love of her.

But how strict the devout Mohammedan is compared to the devout Catholic. They are an austere people who are satisfied with an austere and distant God. How different from the warm-hearted, affectionate Italian, who loves the womanly figure of the Virgin Mother and adores her little child, Jesus. Open any cottage door in Italy, and what do you see?—not the grand figure of God the Father, but

a dancing, laughing Child-Jesus on His mother's lap or in the kindly arms of St Joseph.

In Sicily, God the Father has long since surrendered His place to His beloved Son and to the Virgin Mother. I never saw an Italian man or woman kneeling before a picture or a mosaic representation of God the Father. If He ever enters their thoughts at all He is too far off to be of any use to them. Perhaps He sends the earthquakes and floods, but it is Our Lady of Sorrows and the crucified Christ who heal the sick children and guard the absent loved ones.

The poor Mohammedan has nothing dear or human in his religion, nothing that needs his love and pity—only his fear and absolute submission. For Islam is summed up in the little sentence, "Complete surrender of the will to God."

But I have wandered again from the main point, led away by the holy spot in that Arab house. But if you would have my Carthaginian days just as I myself have them you must forgive my digressions, for my mind was buffeted backwards and forwards from present-day Mohammedanism to the day when St Augustine went to Carthage in search of fresh amours, and back again to the pagan gods and their pagan festivals. I will quote from St Augustine's *Confessions*, as accurately as I can, and show you what he says about one of his visits.

"Next I went to Carthage, where debauchery bubbled round me like a frying-pan. I was not in love, but I loved the idea of love, and the deep-felt want made me hate myself because I wanted less than I should. I sought something to love. Loving, as I say, the idea of love, I

hated the tranquil path where there were no mouse-traps—and yet if these things had no sense, had had no soul, I could not have loved them. To love and to be loved was sweet to me, but sweeter still if I enjoyed the person that I loved.” And here is another picture of his Carthaginian university days: “At Carthage there is a disgraceful licence of disorder among the students. They burst shamelessly into the rooms, and with the demeanour of madmen break up the discipline which the teacher has established for the better progress of his pupils. Many things they will do with the utmost effrontery which are real outrages punishable by law, if it were not that custom has sanctioned them.”

These I suppose were the famous “wreckers.”

“I had reached the top of the school of rhetoric. . . . I would take no part at all in the wild doings of the ‘wreckers,’ a cruel and devilish name, which was looked upon as the stamp of the best set. I lived amongst them, feeling a kind of impudent shame because I could not keep pace with them. I went about with them, and of some of them made friends; yet I always disliked their way of going on, their ‘wrecking,’ their wanton attacks upon the shyness of freshmen, the unprovoked affronts with which they carried on their malignant amusements!”¹

* * * * *

It is hard to believe that this was written by a saint who died on 28th August, A.D. 430, at the very time that the Vandals were besieging Hippo, the scene of the saint's future bishopric. From St Augustine and his gay

¹ From Dr Bigg's translation of the *Confessions of St Augustine*, in Methuen's Library of Devotion.

university days and the pathetic parting with his mother, when he started out from Milan, still unconverted, but where eventually he was baptized (in the Ambrosian rites) into the Christian Church, my mind flew back again to the Arabs of to-day and to the Berbers—those strange relics of prehistoric days who were here before Phœnicians or Romans or Vandals or Saracens ever put foot on Carthaginian soil. Those bundles of brown rags and browner limbs who do all the dirty work of Tunis, work which even a starving Arab thinks beneath him, they are the indigenous people of the soil. They have been driven back, and back, but never completely driven out. They were the owners of the strip of land which the Phœnicians rented from them for trading purposes. Even Queen Dido saw no indignity in continuing to pay the rent for the ground her great city covered.

Are these Berbers with their strange uncouth faces and mahogany limbs, these human scavengers of spotless Tunis, a living illustration of the survival of the fittest? They have seen endless races come and go and kingdoms flame and fade away. They have seen sun-worshippers and pagan idolaters, Christians and Mohammedans, and Christians again, establish their supremacy on this immortal land. But only they have uninterruptedly survived.

Do you remember the Welsh legend which Borrow tells of the survival of the fittest? How the eagle mother carries her young eaglets from their nests, to some great precipice facing the sun, and only the birds which have strength of eye to look up into its full glory she keeps and nourishes; the others, which cannot brave the test, she casts down the precipice and destroys.



Photo Garrigues, Tunis

A BEDOUIN ENCAMPMENT

Have these Berbers of North Africa since the earliest days of man faced the sun unflinchingly? If you look in their eyes you would think so.

One of the most fascinating things about Carthage is the close vicinity of these indigenous masters of the soil and the picturesque homes of the handsome Bedouins. These charming people whom Allah alone guides, often find that His star has conveniently stopped right over some old Punic cistern or gallery of tombs, which make better homes and storehouses than flat canvas tents. Here and there you can see the snake-like neck of a camel emerging from some nameless ruin which forms an excellent fondouk.

I told you in my last letter how I began my second day's pilgrimage at Sidi-Bou-Said. I left off just where we had seen the view from the lighthouse—that lighthouse which will always remain in my memory, graced by the beauty of its roses, deep blood-red roses which poured in a cataract of glory over the white walls of the keeper's house—roses that made my tired veins tingle as warmly as though I had refreshed myself with a draught of rich Carthage wine. How they flamed out, offering themselves up in Eastern abandonment to mother Nature! This wealth of colour flaunted itself against a canopy of unbroken blue.

Before returning to the city and the museum we determined to visit the ancient harbours and the restored cisterns—"the little cisterns," as they are called, although their vastness is overwhelming; but they were the small cisterns in the big Roman times, for the large ones were at the other end of the peninsula, near and behind the Byrsa.

But to us mere moderns these little cisterns, which have

been completely restored by the French, are the most gigantic things you can conceive. They are really too big to speak about, and the body of water they contain is overwhelming. They are barrel-roofed subterranean chambers as beautiful as cathedral aisles.

Water was, I suppose, so precious in this sun-parched land that it deserved in the Phœnician mind as splendid a temple as any god in the city. And it got it.

These cisterns impressed me profoundly. They are the largest buildings in Phœnician Carthage. There was nothing small or niggling about these Tyrian traders in their conception of building a prosperous city; truly they dreamt not of a perishable home.

I could give you their exact measurements, but what do mere figures convey? Absolutely nothing to my mind. Think rather of the ruined Stagnoni at Taormina, that vast underground cathedral built to contain water, and you will do more towards imagining these still greater Carthaginian reservoirs. Some travellers have found fault with the French for restoring them so completely and for putting them back into their original use, but I, for one, think it is a noble and splendid piece of work.

It was difficult to believe that this beautiful clear blue body of water, so cool and silent, had been coaxed into these colossal barrel-roofed chambers. As I walked round it I felt that it was a natural deep lake which had been covered over with arched masonry, divided into aisles.

Next we visited the historical double harbours. They are to me the most complete and understandable things in all Carthage, for they are absolutely perfect. Even the little island in the middle of the inner harbour which served as

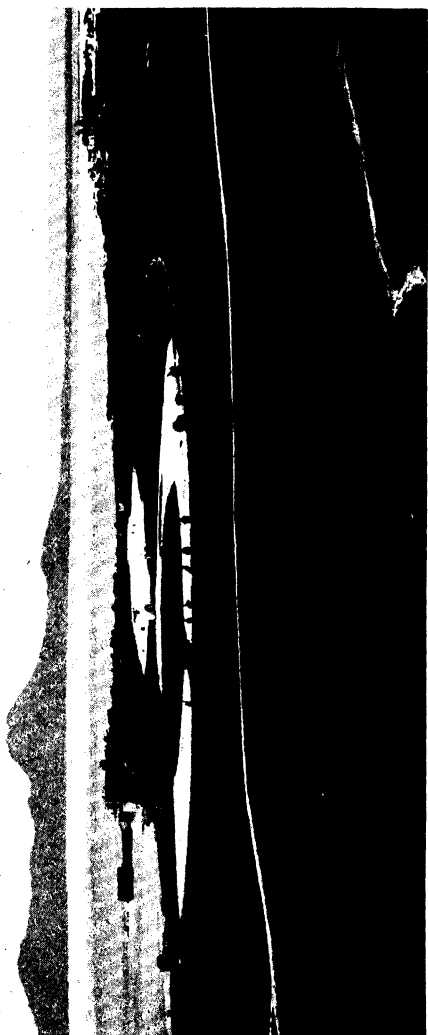


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE NAVAL AND COMMERCIAL HARBOURS OF CARTHAGE, WITH BOU-CORNEIN IN THE DISTANCE

[To face p. 268]

the admiral's residence is there still in perfect neatness. From his home in the centre of this little island, in the centre of this little inland sea, the admiral must have seen every ship that lay in his harbours, and all that was going on. And what scenes of pride and splendour and tragedy did go on in these greatest of all the world's harbours! What changes of fortune they have witnessed! One of the most tragic of all the tragic scenes which stand out in my memory of Carthage is, I think, the humiliation these once all-powerful Phœnicians must have felt when they saw their five hundred vessels burnt before their very eyes in their own harbours.

Just think of the glorious magnanimity Japan showed in her terms of peace with Russia, compared to the terms demanded by Rome at the conclusion of the second Punic War. For besides the brutal burning of these five hundred ships the Carthaginians were forced to give up all claim to their rich islands of the Mediterranean and to their Spanish kingdom, and within seven years to pay a war indemnity of fifty millions sterling.

So proud were the Carthaginians of their ships that it was customary for the whole city to go into mourning when any disaster occurred to their navy from storms at sea or from battles. Even the poorest of the people clothed themselves in black and the city was draped with mourning flags.

I thought it would be nice to baptize in the ancient War Harbour a little gold Sphinx brooch I bought the other day in the only shop in Tunis where you can buy copies of the museum antiquities at Carthage. So, much to Mohammed's amusement, I took it off and reverently immersed it

in the blue waters. Azeez was not so much amused. He said that one American gentleman he knew had always taken a small piece of marble out of his pocket, and with it had touched all the most famous ruins in Carthage. He had carried this stone round Europe, and it had touched all that he had seen in his tour. It was to be an heirloom in his family!

It was a good stiff tramp from the ancient harbours up to the height of the citadel. I am afraid we didn't even try to follow the lost route of those three famous streets which were the scene of such deadly fighting, yet the climb over the actual ground made me more fully realise how awful it must have been. The houses, which were six storeys high, overhung the streets and were filled with maddened and despairing Phœnicians, who poured a hail of missiles and everything else they fought with in those days down on the top of their advancing foes. These fortified streets held out for six bloody days. Bosworth Smith tells the tale of this scene so vividly that I must quote him for your benefit. "From such a downpour, even the Romans shrank. They hesitated for a moment, but it was for a moment only. Storming the first house to which they came, they put its inhabitants to the sword; and then passing step by step, and inch by inch, from building to building, and from roof-top to roof-top by planks laid across the intervals, they massacred every living thing they met. Each house was a castle, and a castle defended by its garrison to the last extremity. . . . At last the citadel was reached and the fighting was at an end. . . ."

The defenders fought with the frenzy of men who saw not only the inevitable fall of their citadel, but the certain

massacre of their wives and children, for these high houses contained in their cellars the children and women of the city, who had flown there for protection. They were no hired mercenaries fighting for wages. They were Phœnicians fighting for the honour of their city, for the sanctity of their gods, and for the safety of their women and children. Here we see the money-loving Tyrian trader at his best ; here we have him worthy to rank with the foe against whom he was fighting. But as Freeman says, "The men of Carthage, like the men of every Semitic state, kept their full strength for the hour when strength of heart and hand was most needed. When destruction seemed drawing near her own soil, the Sacred Band of Carthage could march forth to do like the Sacred Band of Thebes. When destruction was doing its full work within her own walls, her sons could strive to the last gasp as none have striven save her own kinsfolk at Jerusalem."

* * * * *

It was so hot that even Mohammed, in his fine blue cloth garments, heavy with black braid, acknowledged that summer was drawing near, but Azeez, almost as nature made him, except for the flapping white linen shirt, slipped along, gliding over the rough fields strewn with fallen masonry. "Salamanders" were his great delight, and, like a boy of six, instead of an impassioned lover and a good archæologist, he hunted their fat bodies out of holes and tombs and from under gigantic capitals or bases of mutilated columns. Each one he found he insisted upon my coming to see. They certainly were alarmingly large and green. Some of them had big, fat, heavy bodies with quite short, square legs, very evil Egyptian-looking things,

By the Waters of Carthage

but I suppose really quite harmless. Ordinary lizards there were, of course, as green as the greenest grass, and far longer than any we ever saw in Sicily. How they loved the crevices under undisturbed stones and pillars!

When we reached the citadel I rested my weary limbs in the cool and peaceful cathedral, and paid a short visit to what is called the ancient chapel of St Louis, although I think it dates back no further than Louis-Philippe. My last two hours I reserved for the museum.

* * * * *

Perhaps it would be true if anyone said that to-day the real Carthage is in the celebrated Musée Lavignerie; but if it is so, surely it is better than having it buried from human sight under the accumulated debris and soil of centuries. Whole villages have been built out of the ruins of Carthage, and cities even as far as Leghorn beautified from her storehouse of precious marbles. So instead of complaining that "Carthage is now nothing but a museum," we ought to be thankful that never again can even fragments of her fallen greatness go towards the building up of other cities or palaces or harems.

Archbishop Benson, in the lovely chapter on Carthage which introduces the reader to his great work on St Cyprian, says (a little ungratefully, I think), "Archæology has spoiled Carthage for museums as Arabs did for harems and Italian Republics for cathedrals."

To me the museum was fascinating, so fascinating that I am going there as often as ever I can. It is full of such beautiful human things, little domestic and personal articles which bring the real Phœnicians home to one as no ruins ever could.

But if the Musée Lavigerie contained nothing but the superb figures of the priest and priestess of Tanit, of which I told you, it would be rich indeed. These Phœnician statues—or high reliefs, perhaps I should say—develop new meanings and fresh beauties every time you study them.

The Musée Lavigerie is almost as unlike the generality of museums as the lovely cloistered museum at Palermo is. The first day I ever met Jack we took him there, do you remember? And the only thing he looked at or understood was the pile of cannon-balls, which he promptly sat on to smoke.

At the entrance gate of the “Jardin St Louis” (as the museum grounds are called), which is artistically strewn with ancient pillars, marble sarcophagi, gigantic capitals, and busts of massive Roman ladies, which all ingeniously play their part in the scheme of the landscape, there is the little porter’s lodge where one of the White Fathers sells photographs, post-cards, and small antiques to strangers and pilgrims. Here you can buy the conventionalised figure of the goddess Tanit, little terra-cotta lamps, and really splendid Phœnician vases which look like turnips with taper roots.

In the museum itself, which looks like a delightful cool summer villa with its wide upper verandah and deep white loggia, the most interesting things which belong to the first Carthage have almost all been gathered from tombs. It is from the tombs of the dead that we are day by day learning the story of the living. What a mercy it is that the pagans so revered and remembered their dead! With the ancient Greeks a father did not think so much of the pleasure he derived from his son’s companionship in life

as of the comfort in the thought that when he was dead his son would pay due reverence to the tomb of his father.

At one end of the front entrance under the loggia you are greeted by the splendid and exuberant figure of the goddess of Abundance, and at the other end with an equally imposing figure of Victory. These are, of course, Roman. Of beautiful Carthaginian statuary (apart from coffin-lids) there is nothing. Yet the wealth of statuary which decorated the city was not all destroyed. The Romans did show a certain amount of mercy, or reverence for beauty perhaps I should say, for they did not spare these objects of beauty to please the Carthaginians, you may be sure, when they destroyed their city. They remembered that a thing of beauty is a joy for ever, and returned to the cities in Sicily and to elsewhere all the famous statues and priceless objects of art which the Carthaginians had looted in the days of their power. But alas, poor devastated Sicily! She had her best and most beautiful stolen again by that villain Verres, who carried them off to decorate the villas of his mistresses and to add to his priceless collection in Rome.

* * * * *

One of the most delightful things about Carthage is the journey there, for it takes you through a country as Virgilian in its methods of agriculture as anything we ever saw in Sicily. One Arab well and all that pertained to it gave me so much pleasure that I could not devote the attention I ought to have given to the tombs of the officials which are close to it. That well with the slow-treading oxen who drew its water from the bowels of the

earth, guided by a patient Berber, was so much more humanly interesting, and doubtless in its origin no less ancient. The well itself was the usual sunken hollow tower used by the ancients, worked by the familiar bucket-and-chain system. But instead of the bucket being lowered and drawn up by human hands turning a handle, it was done by two oxen.

It stood on a high piece of ground, so that all the oxen had to do was to march slowly up and down a vine-covered pergola which ascended the little hill, and all the Berber had to do was to pull a rope-rein when the oxen arrived at the top of the cool, shaded passage, so as to guide them in turning. When they got to the top of the little hill the long chain rattled down the well and the bucket splashed into the water; when they got to the bottom the bucket rose right up out of the sunken tower which contained the water and ingeniously emptied itself into a square reservoir at the side of the well; just as the oxen turned and took the first few steps up the path the bucket came back empty and began its slow passage into the bowels of the earth again.

I shall never forget that Arab well and the tread-mill existence of both the white oxen and the white-burnished Berber. But he looked perfectly contented and uncomplaining, and of course dignified—"The fate of every man is about his neck." Allah had called him to be a drawer of water and a guider of white oxen. There was an end of it. Allah had ordained! From early morning until the evening call to prayer that silent white-robed figure and those two stately oxen with their Homeric rolling gait will go on treading up and down, and up and down, that short

vine-covered path for the filling and emptying of that bucket of water.

Truly Allah has taught His children the dignity of patience, and so much else has He given them that is good and satisfying that He has made a gentleman of even a nigger. For whatever the most Protestant minds may feel for or against Mohammedanism, they cannot deny that the unspoiled children of Allah are gentlemen.

Think of the ordinary *Christian* nigger in America and then turn to these Mohammedan niggers (of the same breed) in North Africa!—and they are niggers as black as anything that the Seventh Avenue in New York can produce; but they are Mohammedans, and therefore gentlemen. Gentlemen in rags it is true, but “coloured gentlemen” nevertheless.

And that reminds me that it is only Christians and unbelievers who use the term “Mohammedan.” Mohammed was very definite upon the point and clear in his explanation of it. For Mohammed never used the term himself. It was first used by his apostles and early followers. Mohammed did not come to preach Mohammed, but to preach God. In this lies the great and essential difference between Christ and Mohammed. Christ wished his followers to believe in him as the Son of God. Mohammed wished his followers to believe in one God only, not in one who was the third of three.

The Prophets, Mohammed says, over and over again denied that he was anything greater than a human and erring man—at the same time a man whom God had selected to do prophet’s work. And it is to his credit that he many times refused even to attempt to perform miracles,



Photo Garrigus, Tunis

BULLOCKS DRAWING WATER IN THE ANTIQUE WAY AT CARTHAGE

for he did not wish to draw to himself the worship and veneration which belonged to God only. "The unbelievers said, 'Unless a sign be sent down with him from his Lord, we will not believe. But thou art a preacher only, O Mohammed!' Mohammed replied that 'God alone can work miracles. God alone knoweth that which is hidden, and that which is revealed. He is the great and the most high!'

"His love for Christ was so great that he refused to believe that Christ himself ever said that he was the Son of God or preached the Trinity. These things were said of him, not by him. The divine attributes which Christians give Christ were not demanded by Christ, the preacher and reformer. They grew round him; they were the natural outcome of adoration in an Oriental community." This explains why Mohammedans love Christ and hate Christians, for in their eyes and according to the Prophet we have defiled Christ's beautiful teachings. In the eyes of Mohammedans we have no true right to call ourselves Christians.

These little gleanings which drop from my guide's (Mohammed) reserved lips, when I don't ask for them, help me to understand many things which have puzzled me. For over and over again one comes across instances in Tunis of the Arabs' intense reverence for "Seyyedna Eesa" (Lord Jesus) and for his teachings, and for his mother. At the same time their dislike of Christians is so great that the reading of the Koran instantly stops when my Christian hat appears. Once when I lifted a Koran from a shelf in a bookbinder's the shopman snatched it out of my hand and put it beyond my reach. Mohammed

says that as the Prophet is an historical personage, and as the Koran is a book which was written while the Prophet was still alive, Mohammedans have the very words of Mohammed himself to go by. "But how difficult is your New Testament, madame!" he said. "Things were said in it of Christ which Christ never said himself, or even authorised, just as things are said and exaggerated about people to-day who have been dead only ten years or less."

"Then the Koran was not actually written by the Prophet himself?" I said.

"No, but by the Prophet's apostles and followers. Much of it was taken down as the words left the Prophet's lips—he himself knew every word of it—other portions were treasured up and written on the first suitable object that came to hand, after the inspirations had been delivered. Sometimes it was on shoulder-bones of mutton, oyster-shells, bits of wood, or stones—anything, in fact, that was flat and durable. It was actually put together after his death by Abu Bakr.

"You should read the Koran, madame," he said, "and there you will see for yourself what reverence Mohammed had for Christ, what outbursts of generous praise he gave him. But the love and praise are not for *your* Christ, not for the Christ who pretended he was divine, but for Christ himself, as he was when he came to turn men's thoughts back to the only true God; the Christ who came to clear the temples of their idols and to make men bow the knee, not before things of wood and stone, but to the Master of Worlds."

"Perhaps He is my Christ, too, Mohammed," I said,

"but that does not mean that I am a Moslem. If I have the same Christ in my heart why will you not allow me to enter your mosques?"

He smiled sadly. "But after all, madame," he said, "as the Prophet so often said, Christians and Moslems have the same God, and that is what really matters."

Yours ever,

DORIS.

CHAPTER XVI

TUNIS, *May 19—.*

DEAREST HUSBAND,

My days in Tunis are drawing so quickly to an end that I can count them now on four fingers, for I have done as I promised—I have taken my ticket for the very next “transatlantic” boat that goes straight to Marseilles. At present it seems likely that I shall have to leave without seeing the dénouement of “the Romance of the Souks,” for absolutely nothing has been seen or heard of the beautiful Sylvia since that evening at the Bardo. Rather a pathetic little incident happened last night, however, in connection with the affair, of which I must tell you. On my return from Carthage, where I had been spending a long and happy afternoon in the museum, I was rather surprised to get a little note from Mohammed, asking me to grant him a few moments’ conversation. As he had been with me in the museum and at Carthage he had had plenty of opportunity to speak to me about anything, but he had never been more dignifiedly reserved or silent.

He was waiting for me on the balcony which looks out on the square. What a very long time it seems since I first stood and looked at that Porte de France, that gate of the Orient. When I appeared he came forward and bowed very low. I saw by his extreme pallor that he was anxious and disturbed. “I have come to ask if you could do without my services as a guide during the rest of your

stay in Tunis, madame. It distresses me to give you the slightest inconvenience, but I cannot help it."

"Why, Mohammed," I said, "surely this is very sudden! But I will spare you if you wish to go; you were with me all day, and never even suggested the possibility of such a thing. Are you tired of my enthusiasms?"

His face flushed at the temples in the true Oriental way. "No, madame, pray do not think so. It has been before my mind for some days past—it has made me sad; but to-night, on my return home, I found a message which takes me from Tunis."

We looked at each other in silence. I understood.

"Is she in danger, Mohammed? Who brought you the message?"

"Mabrucka," was all he said, but he gave that little throw back of the head which means negation. He didn't know.

"Mabrucka?" I said. "I have seen her haunting this square for days past; she has been prowling about after dusk and in the early mornings like an expectant cat."

Mohammed almost smiled. "She is grateful to you, but not being able to make you understand, she has waited until I passed through the square."

"What has she told you? Madame Ajeeb is my country-woman; if she is really in need of help I must go to her."

If you had seen the way Mohammed smiled! If I had suggested visiting the Kaaba and carrying away that wonderful black stone, he could not have looked more supercilious.

"Impossible, madame," he said. "Do you not yet

"Do you anticipate her return to Tunis? Why should she leave Gafsa?"

He hesitated. "One cannot tell. Monsieur Ajeeb might send her farther into the interior."

Again we looked at each other and mind read mind.

"So far into the interior," I said, "that news of her funeral would not reach the outer world."

Mohammed's silence was significant.

"But why in the world should Monsieur Ajeeb desire her death?" I asked. "Perhaps you are exaggerating the danger. If my friend has offered to pay not only all the expenses of the court but to give Monsieur Ajeeb a handsome—" I hesitated—"a handsome present!"—in cold blood it sounded as though Jack was a very guilty person instead of a most honourable and innocent knight.

"Ah! madame," he said, "how can anyone tell but Allah, for only Allah knows what is best and what is worst in our hearts."

"But in common sense, Mohammed," I said, "why should Monsieur Ajeeb wish it?"

"If I try to explain, it will not be pretty; you must forgive me. Madame Ajeeb is a beautiful woman. Even though her soul is as white as snow, she has the physical attractions which appeal to the men of all nations. In Monsieur Ajeeb's Saracen blood there is even more than your cool Western mind could understand. If he can drag no response from her to his Oriental ideas of affection, he can enjoy a Saracen's pleasure in torture. With the Oriental nothing passes unobserved. He may have seen"—Mohammed dropped his eyes—"as I have seen,

Madame Ajeeb's eyes assume a different expression when your friend has addressed her."

"Oh, Mohammed!" I said, "not physical torture? Poor Sylvia! She is so gentle and beautiful, the gods could not allow it!"

"Physical torture is nothing, madame, to such a woman. She would welcome it, for it has its own end—the 'Great Peace.' What Madame Ajeeb shrinks from is all that separates the East from the West, all that she never dreamt of when she married that Moor; all that was uppermost in the Oriental nature before Mohammed came to save us."

"I know what you mean, Mohammed; the children of the Prophet and the children of Christ have the same God, but different morals."

"That is not the fault of the Prophet's teachings, madame, but of the climate, of the people, of the Oriental minds behind the creed—the sensuality of the Orient was there long before Mohammed began his divine mission. Mohammed's teachings raised the lower standard of Oriental morals proportionately higher than Christ's teachings have raised the less sensual Western world."

"Most Christians think that the religion of Islam is one of sensuality and ease and selfishness, that the great blot on the Prophet's creed is the laxity of the morals he enforced."

"He was the product of his time and of his race; you forget that he was a man and only a man, a man to whom nothing in human nature was strange."

"That is what has been said of the great Hannibal, Mohammed."

"It is what can be said of all great men. Both men were

great generals, both men were great leaders of men, and to lead men you must understand them. But the Prophet was not only an inspired general but the founder of a nation and of a religion. Even his enemies cannot deny his power and his greatness. But if he had not been divinely inspired, how could he have achieved what he did? "

" Tell me, Mohammed ; I know so little."

" It seems strange to us Arabs, madame, that all Mussulmans know about the great prophet Christ, and the beautiful story of his life and work, but few Christians take the trouble to read even the merest outline of our Prophet's history."

" Tunis has made me realise that, Mohammed," I said ; " it has made me ashamed that I knew almost nothing about the man who founded one of the greatest religions in the world ; a man who actually changed the face of the unchanging East."

" You know, madame, that he was born, like Christ, of very humble parents, and that his mother was so delicate and feeble that he was nursed and suckled by a poor woman who lived in a tent. The first years of the Prophet's life were spent in just such tents as you see the Bedouins living in near Carthage to-day. When his father died, his share of the family belongings amounted to only a few sheep, five camels, and one female slave. But he had an uncle who, although only a poor man himself, remained faithful to his trust. He had promised to look after his orphan nephew, whose duty it was to tend the sheep and camels on the neighbouring farms. Arabs are very faithful to their blood and loyal to their tribes. In his great days the Prophet loved to look back upon the time when he was

a poor shepherd, and he used to remind his followers that he himself had watched his sheep on the silent plains. God had never chosen anyone to be a prophet," Mohammed used to say, "who had not, like Moses and David, or like himself, tended sheep in the wilderness."

Mohammed paused—"But I tire you, madame?"

"No, indeed, you interest me immensely," I said.

"I am telling you of his humble origin and of the surroundings in which he was raised to prove to you that unless he had been chosen by God, unless he had been an inspired prophet, how could he have done what he did? Even his health was against him, for he suffered from epileptic fits. Yet in his day, even as a man, who was his equal?"

"When did he first begin his mission?" I asked.

"Not until after his marriage with Khadijah, not until after he was forty years of age."

"Khadijah?" I said; "she was the rich elderly wife, the toothless old woman——"

"Yes, madame, that is the same. When Mohammed grew to manhood he became a camel-driver. A rich widow sent him to Syria to trade for her, and he proved so trustworthy and so valuable a servant that she asked him to marry her. She was fifteen years his senior, but the marriage was one of perfect happiness; she was his companion and helpmate, and, as well, the mother of his children. It was Khadijah who comforted and helped him when he flew to her, amazed and trembling, after his first vision; it was she who gave him courage to believe himself worthy of so high a mission. When the angel appeared and told Mohammed to read what was written on the silver roll which he

held in his hand, Mohammed said, 'I cannot read.' The angel twice repeated the words, and twice the Prophet answered, 'I cannot read.' At last the angel said, 'Read in the name of the Lord, who created all besides Himself; who created man out of a clot of blood; read the name of the Most High, who taught with the pen; who taught man that which he never knew.'

"Then the Prophet felt the heavenly inspiration and read the decrees of God, which were written on a silver scroll—the decrees which he afterwards gave to his people in the Koran. When he had finished reading, the angel Gabriel said:

"'Of a truth thou art a prophet of God.'"

"I should like to study more of his teachings, Mohammed."

"If you will allow me I will send you a copy of the Koran. I should feel honoured if you would accept it, as a *souvenir* of Tunis. It is not like your Bible, for it contains no connected history—it has no sequence. The suras were all separate inspirations—the outpourings of a mind and heart devastated and cleansed by God. They were written in varying moods and under varying circumstances, not by a great scholar chosen for his learning, but by a simple peasant who could neither read nor write until the day when he was visited by the angel Gabriel. He had an Oriental mind, madame; and that is what you must remember, for if his code of morals falls below your Christian standard, it is only fair to recollect that he gave his people the highest code they could accept. He was too human himself to forget the depravity of human nature."

"Please send me a copy, Mohammed; I should value it above everything else you could give me."

"Thank you," he said; "but remember above all things, when you read it, if you wish to understand his character and teachings, that the Prophet never said he was divine, that the only miracle he himself ever admitted having performed was the inspiration of the Koran. He was merely a prophet commissioned by God and inspired by Him to reform the world. The Koran was written for the guidance of men who had to be appealed to from an Oriental standpoint; so if sometimes his descriptions of a future life do not seem to you idealistic, they were high enough for his people. He gave them, not perhaps what he himself thought the highest, but what he thought was the highest they could understand. Ayesha, who knew the human side of his great nature better than anyone else, used to say, 'My master is as bashful as an unveiled virgin.'"

"I wish I understood," I said, "but it is all very mixed. The bare principles of his religion sound very simple—the belief in only one God—that great and eternal truth—and the absolute rejection of the Trinity (the acceptance of which is the stumbling-block with so many good Christians), and the denial of the divinity of Christ."

"The complete surrender of oneself to God," Mohammed said quickly—"that is the essence of it."

"But that is the difficulty. How could the Prophet pretend that he had surrendered himself to God, that God, in fact, guided him in all he did, when he had nine wives—one of them the very human and beautiful Ayesha, and another the wife of his own adopted son, divorced on purpose for the Prophet to marry her; and,

surely worst of all, his marriage with the Egyptian slave—a Christian?"

Mohammed smiled. "You are familiar with all his weaknesses, madame."

"They are what I have been taught," I said; "but I am willing to hear all that is great also."

"It is difficult for us to-day, madame, to accept the low standard of that day," he said; "and especially for the Western mind"—he gave his queer laugh—"for the West loves its moral whitewash! But in the days when the Koran was written, the right of polygamy was unquestioned; it was the natural condition of a polygamous people. Besides, for the twenty-four years of his married life with the faithful Khadijah, she had no rival. Yet she was old enough to be his mother, and not beautiful."

I laughed. "I am afraid we do love our whitewash, Mohammed, but who does not? The desire even to look clean is something."

"The ancients were very good at it," Mohammed said; "at Carthage the custom was in common use, for when they offered up bulls and white cows to their gods, they used to paint over the blemished spots with white, so that the deities should be taken in and think they were spotless and without a flaw."

"But the Prophet was surely no self-deceiver," I said. "*He* couldn't imagine that God had ordained that he, the Prophet, was to make his adopted son divorce his wife in order that he himself might marry her."

"Certainly not, madame; but the Prophet was only human, nor did he pretend to be exempt from human

weaknesses. How often in the Koran he confesses his own sins and moral shortcomings! In one passage he says: 'Whatever good befalleth thee it is from God: whatever befalleth thee for evil it is from thyself.' "

"But, Mohammed, I thought you said, 'The fate of every man is about his neck'? It is really all very contradictory. How shall I ever understand where free-will begins and where fatalism leaves off?"

"It is quite true, madame," he said. "We Mussulmans of to-day are too apt to think that fate never does leave off; Kismet is made accountable for everything, good and evil alike. But for *that* the Prophet is not to blame; it is our own little bit of 'whitewashing.' "

* * * * *

But to return to Madame Ajeeb, although there is little else to tell you, for Mohammed says that she spoke to him of her desire to remain in hiding in Gafsa until Jack had left Tunis. Poor Sylvia! She naturally thinks that Jack should marry someone whose worldly prospects are at least as good as his own—a girl with no tragic past, to make her eyes look like deep lakes in the desert. She knows, poor soul, that Time, the great healer, will do its work for Jack.

When we parted, Mohammed kissed my hand, and for more than a minute I couldn't speak. "And you will grant me the honour, madame?" he said.

"What honour?" I asked.

"Of sending you an English translation of the 'Grea Book'?"

I nodded, for really I couldn't speak.

"I do not hope to convert you," he said, "but I should like you to learn more and understand better the teachings of our Master."

"Are Mohammedans keen about proselytising, Mohammed?" I asked.

"Certainly," he said; "look at our great work in East Africa. We are not like the Jews, who surrender their birthright if they impart their religion to strangers. We deserve to lose ours if we do not spread it from pole to pole."

Just as he left the terrace the evening call to prayer rang out clear and sonorous. How strangely familiar the four times repeated first words have become: "Allahu-Akbar, Allahu-Akbar" ("There is no God but God"). It seems quite long ago since I lay awake that morning from the glimmer of dawn to hear the *Ahdan* (morning cry) for the first time:

"God is most great. I testify there is no God but God. I testify that Mohammed is the messenger of God. Come to prayer, come to salvation. Prayer is better than sleep. God is most great. There is no God but God."

* * * * *

Bosworth Smith says: "The creed is Islam, a verbal noun, derived from a root meaning submission to, faith in God, and the believers who so submit themselves are called Moslem, a partipicle of the same root." Emanuel Deutsch (and he is the great Semitic authority) says: "When the Talmud was gathered in, the Koran began; Islam is little else than a republication of Judaism with such modifications as suited the Arab soil, plus

By the Waters of Carthage

the important addition of the Prophet's mission of Mohammed." It is rather a curious fact that the first muezzin was a blind negro called Bilal.

Good-night, dear keeper of my heart.

Yours ever,

DORIS.

CHAPTER XVII

TUNIS, *May 19—.*

MY DEAR HUSBAND,

There is one thing of which I quite forgot to tell you, and that is the tomb of Lella Manouba, the great female saint of Tunis. I went with other eager pilgrims to visit her mosque last Monday. I wonder how I can manage to convey to you a very faint impression of that vividly Eastern scene.

Her tomb lies behind the Kasba on the side of a steep hill which is crowned by the ancient fort of Manouba. This fort is one of the points of view from which you *ought* see Tunis. It must be, for Baedeker gives it a double star!

I know we took the tram part of the way, but we had to walk up the steep hill. This sounds vague, but to you who have never been in Tunis it is definite enough for my purpose.

But it does not matter what you go to see in Tunis, you can always get a tram there and contrive to return through the souks, and I really grudge letting a day pass now without passing through them at least twice, for the souks are my illustrated Koran—my daily lesson in things Mohammedan. To-day, for instance, how much more I understood when I saw the usual row of patient, brown-limbed paupers sitting on benches along the walls of the bazaars. They were waiting for the distribution of the oil-and-bread charity and for the bowls of date soup which the faithful distribute to them in memory of the Prophet.

Outside the Prophet's house there was a bench on which the starving poor used to rest and wait for the food from his table. He himself christened them "my people of the bench," and we have Ayesha's word for it that the Prophet, who always fared most frugally, even in the days of his greatest power and popularity, used to deny himself even the simple fare of figs and dates so as to give them to his "people of the bench."

Things don't change much with these children of the sun when these benchers still exist in the bazaars in Tunis to-day.

Mohammed sent me a copy of the Great Book—such an ugly little green, linen-bound thing it is, but the best he could get in the Christian shop in French Tunis. But alas! how different from the beautiful long-leaved, yellow-toned parchment affairs with exquisite red and black lettering which you see spread before the devout Mohammedans in the souks. I liked one little passage on charity so much that I copied it out for your benefit.

"Every good act is charity, your smiling in your brother's face, your putting a wanderer on the right road, your giving water to the thirsty is charity. Exhortations to another to do right are a charity."

* * * * *

The mosque which holds the tomb of Lella Manouba stands on a projecting cliff of a high hill. A dusty unsheltered road leads straight up to it, with nothing to distract the eye from the main object. I reached the bottom of the hill not later than eight A.M., for Mohammed had warned me that in these hot May days the pilgrims visit the tomb very early, as only dogs and Christians

like the sun; and he was right. Already the road was dotted here and there with absurd white figures whose garments seemed more suited for a Canadian winter than for a blazing African summer sun. Mohammed left me at the foot of the hill, because, he said, I should see nothing if I had a man with me, but if I went with the women up the hill without him they would, in all probability, be forced to unfold their swathings of white and display their grand under-garments, as the day was so hot.

I was glad I had come in good time, for very soon carriages began to arrive and to empty themselves of their black-veiled occupants, who with no loss of time started on their weary toil up the hot hill along with the poorer pedestrians. Young and old, rich and poor, on and on they came, most of them very large and very fat, but some more comely in outline than any Arab women I had seen so far. And for once there were lots and lots of charming little Arab girls with eyes as black as sloes and trousers as baggy and bright as clowns' pantaloons.

As a rule everything Mohammedan in Tunis is for males only, but this was a purely feminine show; there was not a male thing amongst them except the unsexed coachmen at the bottom of the hill. And what a strange band of pilgrims they looked, for you could see nothing but their black masks and shapeless white figures! As they got higher and higher up the hill, and as the sun got fiercer and fiercer, they began to throw open their outer garments a little, but only a very little. It was then I began to catch brief glimpses of those pinks and turquoise-blues and greens which the Orient alone can produce, and tinselled

gauze chemises and delicately embroidered scarfs. It was never more than a fleeting glimpse, except on the little children, for nothing older than twelve years is really meant to be looked at. But little Arab girls are almost as gay and fancifully dressed as little Japanese girls (those human butterflies you see flitting about the parks in Japan). Some of them wore striped pink and pale blue and white trousers, delicately powdered with tiny flowers, and the gayest of gay satin zouaves massed with gold. Tiny jewelled caps like crowns sat on their dark heads. They were dear little things with passionate brown eyes that gleamed like cut onyx.

At the foot of the first flight of steps which leads up to the outer door of the mosque I stopped. I felt that it was not wise to go farther uninvited, but an elderly woman by whose side I had been walking pointed to the step and motioned to me to go up farther. I longed to go as far as the first door, which opened straight on to the almost perpendicular flight of steps which led right into the tomb itself, but I stopped half-way, for some of the women did not seem so friendly.

Once inside this door the women commenced throwing off their outer wraps and became more natural generally, conversing eagerly with one another as they climbed the stair. If I knelt down I could easily see all that was going on.

I had taken up my post by the side of the blind nigger musicians who were playing on the usual green vase-shaped drums and other Oriental instruments which torture music. It was a splendid position, for I could see both up and down the pilgrims' way, and I could watch

the strange figures one after another step across the forbidden portal; and as they climbed up the inner steps I caught suggestive flashes of gay Oriental silks and I could hear the tinkling of silver anklets. The little girls were trotting up and down the steps in the merriest way; evidently *they* were on very intimate terms with the saint Lella Manouba, and were enjoying themselves thoroughly. "You little daughters of Allah," I said to myself, "who are to-day so fondly loved by your mothers, what a debt of gratitude you owe to the Prophet—for if Allah made you the Prophet certainly saved you." I had just been reading in bed that very morning Bosworth Smith's account of how in the "times of ignorance," which means in the dark days *before* the Prophet, Arab parents used to bury their female children alive (the superfluous ones I mean, and they were many), sometimes as soon as they were born, but just as often when they had reached the age of six!

The father was generally himself the murderer. "Perfume and adorn," he would say to the mother, "your daughter, that I may convey her to her mothers." This done he led her to a pit dug for the purpose, bade her look down into it, and then, as he stood behind her, pushed her headlong in; then, filling up the pit himself, levelled it with the rest of the ground! It is said that the only occasion on which a certain Othman ever shed a tear was when his little daughter, whom he was burying alive, wiped the dust of the grave from his beard.

This was one of the many ghastly and inhuman practices which the Prophet denounced absolutely, and for ever. And now these little girls are not only allowed to grow up

(even when they are scarcely needed), but they have certain rights and privileges of their own when they are grown to womanhood ; not many, it is true, from our point of view, but what they have they owe to the Prophet. Until his coming they were the slaves first of their parents and afterwards of their husbands, who could even kill them if they chose.

But to return to the actual pilgrims themselves. There was scarcely one who did not carry in her arms some offering to the saint. Such practical offerings they were, too, that I could not help thinking that the family to whom the saintship belonged, and to whom I supposed these offerings would eventually find their way, had given the faithful a hint that their best parlour needed a new carpet, or their couch some fine rugs. One poor old tottering lady, who positively rolled herself out of her carriage, had her arms burdened with rugs and carpets, and draperies of all sorts. These rich offerings made one wonder if the Prophet's family shared in any of the great wealth which poured into the Kaaba from all parts of the world, for, strangely enough, poor as his family were, they were the hereditary guardians of the " Black Stone." And this being the case it was to his credit that he did what he could to restore the Kaaba to its original use. It had become almost pagan in its abuses. He cleansed it of its idols, and put a stop to the pagan orgies which had with custom gradually been accepted as part of the original sacred rites. Idolatry was what he had come to overthrow, and in the Kaaba alone he overthrew six hundred idols. He didn't wish to set up a fresh god in the shape of Mohammed, but to throw down false ones. But he knew his people too well

to attempt to abolish altogether the ancient and sacred rites of the Kaaba, rites which were old and most highly revered by all Arabs in the days of Diodorus Siculus, who wrote his history when Jesus Christ was a child. But he put a stop to the nude processions and other licentious practices which defiled the sacred spot, just as St Augustine more than two hundred years earlier had put a stop to the love-festivals which were, he said, a disgrace to Christian Carthage. Even in St Paul's day these "love-festivals"—originated by a devout society of Christians—had degenerated into little else than gorgeous banquets.

I have copied out for you Bosworth Smith's description of what the Kaaba really was when Mohammed began his great work, and here I may mention that out of the little library of books you selected for me to read upon things Tunisian and Mohammedan, his are the two books I have found the most useful. *Carthage and the Carthaginians* and *Mohammed and Mohammedanism* have been my constant companions—they are so human, so vivid, so helpful. This is his splendid description of the Kaaba: "But the most famous and the most ancient sanctuary in the country was the Kaaba, called Beit-Allah, or House of God, built in the shape of a cube, and forming a veritable Pantheon of all Arabia. Here was the great array of three hundred and sixty idols, one for every day in the year. Here was the famous Hobal, the figure of a man carved in red agate and holding seven wingless arrows in his hand, like those used in divination. Here, strange to say, was a statue of Abraham, and, stranger still, a statue of the Madonna! Here was Zemzem, the sacred spring which bubbled forth, as the Bedouins believed, from the sandy soil to save the

life of Ishmael, their great progenitor, when perishing of thirst. Here was the white stone which was supposed to form his sepulchre; and here, above all, was the Black Stone, that stone which had fallen from heaven in the time of Adam, once of dazzling whiteness, but long since turned black by the kisses of sinful mortals."

And this is how it is to-day.

"Seven times the pilgrim walks around the sacred mosque, seven times he kisses the 'Black Stone'; he drinks the blackest water of the sacred well Zemzein, buries the parings of his nails, and hair he has at length shaved, in the consecrated ground; he next ascends Mount Arafat and showers stones on the three mysterious pillars.

"The ceremonies of the Kaaba may perhaps seem to us ridiculous, but the shrine is one which kindled the feelings of the Arab patriot, and roused the hopes of the Bedouins of the desert, ages before Miltiades fought, and tens of ages before Columba preached. It has been consecrated in its later history by its connection with the grandest forward movement that the Eastern world has ever known; and, in spite of the mummeries and the abuses which have grown round the pilgrimage of the Hajj in the course of ages, I should be slow indeed to assert that the feelings which still draw, year after year, Musalmans by myriads from the burning sands of Africa, from the snows of Siberia, and the coral reefs of the Malays, towards a barren valley in Arabia, do not, on the whole, elevate rather than depress them in the scale of humanity. In their own rough and imperfect way they raise the mind of the nomad and the shepherd from the animal life of the present

to the memories of the distant past and the hopes of the far future. They are the living testimony of the unity of God, and a homage paid by the unprogressive nations of the world to that Prophet who softened the savage breast and elevated the savage mind, and taught them what, but for him, they had never learned at all."

* * * * *

But I have lifted your eyes from the picture I wished to convey—that white tomb high on its white cliff domed against an azure sky, and that long white road covered with straggling white figures. From my vantage-point I could see their silver anklets flashing brightly in the sunlight. But these fine ankle-fetters betrayed the provincial order of their wearers, for the wealthy Tunisians no longer care for their wives to wear them—they are a relic of the past, and suburban! I think this is a pity, for the rest of their dress is so absurd and offensive to our modern ideas of civilisation that these barbaric baubles were well in keeping with it and were highly picturesque.

Yet as I watched some of the country cousins climb the high steps, with their bundles of offerings in their arms, their dangling ornaments did, I must admit, seem almost heavy enough to inconvenience them in walking—but then their veils are also a terrible inconvenience.

Again I wondered why the jealous Oriental prefers to let his wife unveil her ankles instead of her face. But I suppose it is the old story—what the whole world can see no one ever stops to look at, for certainly the ankles of these Arab women seem to awaken little interest in passers-by.

Some of them were loaded with tiny bells, and I thought of the old nursery rhyme :

“Rings on her fingers, and bells on her toes,
She shall make music wherever she goes.”

Perhaps this was another cunning device of the jealous husband, for like the Jews who had to wear bells on their clothes to announce their near vicinity, the Arab wife may be compelled to wear bells on her ankles to prevent her from straying and to warn her master of her approach.

As I stood by the blind musicians one or two of the women spoke to me. They were gentle and friendly so I ventured to point to the first door and ask by signs if I might step inside it ; but the “ No ” was emphatic enough, though they shook their heads apologetically and smiled. They were, of course, very much interested in my dress, a covert coat and short walking skirt, and in return for examining it pretty closely some of them threw back their own outer wraps, to let me see their jewellery. But they had little that was either beautiful or interesting. All of them, of course, had chains strung with black stones or black amulets of some sort. I wish I knew if these precious black stones bear any relation to the Black Stone of the Kaaba of which I have been writing.

This outing to the tomb of Lella Manouba is the one weekly festivity which the Tunisian Arab women are permitted to enjoy.

A sorry enjoyment it seemed to me, but no doubt there is more in it than meets the tourists' eyes ; there is this to be said for it, of course, that where two or three women (of any nationality) are gathered together, there will some

other woman's name be taken in vain, so it had its excitements of scandal giving and receiving.

It is also, I suppose, a good opportunity for the showing off of fine clothes and for the interchange of harem gossip.

I wonder if the Koran warns women against wasting their time in visiting the tombs of saints and against going to popular mosques too often. The Japanese Onna Daigaku certainly warns the Japanese women against a too great familiarity with their gods, and forbids them visiting their temples oftener than their husbands and mothers-in-law think proper.

I imagine the Koran has something to say on the subject, for how seldom one sees an Arab woman going into a mosque in Tunis! There is a special women's mosque which, I suppose, they may visit as often as they choose. Etiquette forbids any but the poorest women being seen in public places, and mosques are of course very public and dangerously full of men.

Tombs of saints afford a safe refuge for thieves and criminals, for those who fly there for safety cannot be dragged out, or given over to justice.

Barren wives make special pilgrimages to this tomb of Lella Manouba, who is their kind intercessor. Her sanctuary is certainly one of the landmarks of Tunis, for her white dome towers over even the height of the Kasba, and this procession of Monday pilgrims bearing candles and other offerings is one of the most Eastern and Oriental sights in the city.

Yet there is very little to see—nothing more than a white road flooded with white-robed pilgrims toiling up to the whitewashed mosque, perched on a bracket of rock

projecting from a high white hill, and all above and around the unbroken blue of the African sky. Yet how vividly it will hold its place in my memory ! I know that for just as long as I shall be able to remember anything I shall remember those veiled women of the Orient, shuffling off their strange shoes before crossing the portal of that sacred green door which shut them off from my sight.

Do you remember I told you that the Arabs look upon people of unsound mind as the particular children of Allah, and venerate them as saints ? Well, I discovered the other day that this idea is not of Mohammedan origin, for the ancient Romans had their "ceriti," so called because Ceres sometimes deprived her worshippers of their reason.

* * * * *

To-morrow I am going to see the ecclesiastical courts of the Cadi—a great sight, I believe, and still quite unaffected by Western influences. In Mohammed's absence I have to content myself with a Jew dragoman, but he has his uses, for as a Jew he shows me things which Mohammed as a Mohammedan preferred to overlook.

A dozen times a day I say to myself: "Surely I shall see both Mohammed and Sylvia Ajeeb again, for I can't believe that that tragic personality has passed out of my life for ever." I saw la petite Belge this morning on my way through the souks ; she was buying carpets in the great big bazaar almost as imposing as Liberty's in London—but it was the East, for you can sit on the floor and drink coffee, while a splendid fat Moor in an oft-folded turban flutters and unfolds old carpets from Badgad or Kairowan in front of you. They are so soft and light that with one little shake he can make them ripple and billow like the

waves of the sea ; you could carry one of these fine carpets like a shawl over your arm ! One was large enough to cover the floor of a mosque : it cost £2000. *La petite Belge* knows even less about Sylvia than I do. The old Arab proverb, "A man can bear anything but the mention of his wife," prevents her being unduly curious on the subject when she sees Monsieur Ajeeb, who, by the way, has become so impassioned that *la Belge* thought it advisable to pay a two days' visit to Biskra.

Jack is going about in a state of silent distraction. Mohammed in his eyes is a marabout—his simple, unselfish devotion to his beautiful lady raises him to the altar. Their mutual admiration for the tragic Sylvia gives them a bond of sympathy. Their affection for each other is really funny. To Mohammed, Jack is the type of Englishman he knows best, the type whom the Arabs knew and respected, and loved, long before the French came to upset our friendly feelings with them. Jack is the sport-loving, open-air-living, simple-hearted gentleman whom they perfectly understand and who has a good many characteristics in common with the Arab, principally perhaps his love of freedom and his belief in his own countrymen. Bosworth Smith sums up the Arab fairly and concisely when he says :

"It is not that the Arab lacks the intelligence or the power to change his condition—he does not wish, or rather he wishes not, to do so. He looks upon himself as the highest type of creation, upon his language as the most perfect language ; and in this, if Arabic scholars are to be believed, and if the music of the Koran is what they say it is, he is not so far wrong. Upon the Arabs, and upon the

Arabs alone, as he proudly insists, God has bestowed four privileges—that their turbans should be their diadems, their tents their homes, their swords their entrenchments, and their poems their laws. Passionately fond of liberty, the Arab may well boast that, whatever the cause, his country has never been conquered by foreign foes. Alexander dreamed, but only dreamed, of conquering Arabia. Trajan struck medals to commemorate his conquests of it; but what he conquered was not Arabia at all, but only an outlying province of it, and that he did not attempt to hold.”

Yet even more than the Arab does the Bedouin love his liberty. “They call themselves Mussulmans, but they adore freedom too much to trouble themselves about obeying the Mussulman’s law. They pray, many of them,” says Burckhart, “not five times a day, but never.”

* * * * *

And now, dear, I must stop, for the faithful Achmet waits.

Always yours,

DORIS.

CHAPTER XVIII

TUNIS, *May* 19—.

MY DEAR HUSBAND,

The strangest and happiest thing has happened since I posted my letter to you, only twenty-four hours ago. In it I told you, if you remember, that I could not believe that I had seen the last of Sylvia Ajeeb and of the good Mohammed ; well, I was right, for I have seen them both again, and Sylvia is no longer Madame Ajeeb but Sylvia Lestrangle (for that was her maiden name)—a free woman, and almost a happy one.

But please, dear, let me tell you just how it all came to pass, and how I saw the dramatic close of her career as Madame Ajeeb.

I went with my Jew dragoman to see the court of the Cadi, little anticipating any excitement or particular interest in the event. The court of the Cadi is, as I mentioned before, the ecclesiastical and religious court of Mohammedan Tunis. All civil cases are tried before the Bey ; all domestic or family affairs come before the Cadi, who for the time being represents the Prophet.

After satisfying the porter at the outer gate that we had no camera about our persons, we experienced no difficulty in gaining admittance to the square courtyard which faces the law court, and which is exactly similar in the style of its architecture and in character to the colonnaded patio of all Arab houses. The little rooms where the judges administer justice open off this courtyard just as the

bedrooms and public rooms opened off the two courtyards in Monsieur Amour's harem.

When we entered there were quite a number of long-bearded, high-stomached, pallid-faced Moors and elderly city-bred Arabs walking majestically about the sunny square, all carrying rolls of parchment in their hands—legal documents, I suppose. There was also a sprinkling of lean bronzed-limbed countrymen in dilapidated brown-and-white-striped garments.

I didn't realise that the great ecclesiastical courts were held in the rooms which opened directly off this first courtyard, so I seated myself for a few moments on a bench against the wall, on the right hand as I entered, to enjoy the coolness of the shaded colonnade and to study the designs of the lovely mashrabeyah work overhead. I imagined that we should find the court of the Cadi inside the building and that there would be the usual second or inner courtyard to inspect before we reached the courts. After resting in a dreamy do-nothing state for a few moments it occurred to me that it would be wise to get up and follow the line of people walking across the courtyard from the entrance gate to the opposite wall. I did so, and there, within ten feet of where I had been sitting, I was suddenly confronted with the most Oriental picture I ever saw; and there also, in the centre of that green-lined court of the Cadi, stood Sylvia Ajeeb. At first I didn't see her, for I had eyes only for the vivid mass of greens and orange-yellows that made up that mass of colour. When I did see her, the full significance of her presence in that sacred Mohammedan court didn't reach my brain. I simply saw her, a slight, grey-clad English figure standing before

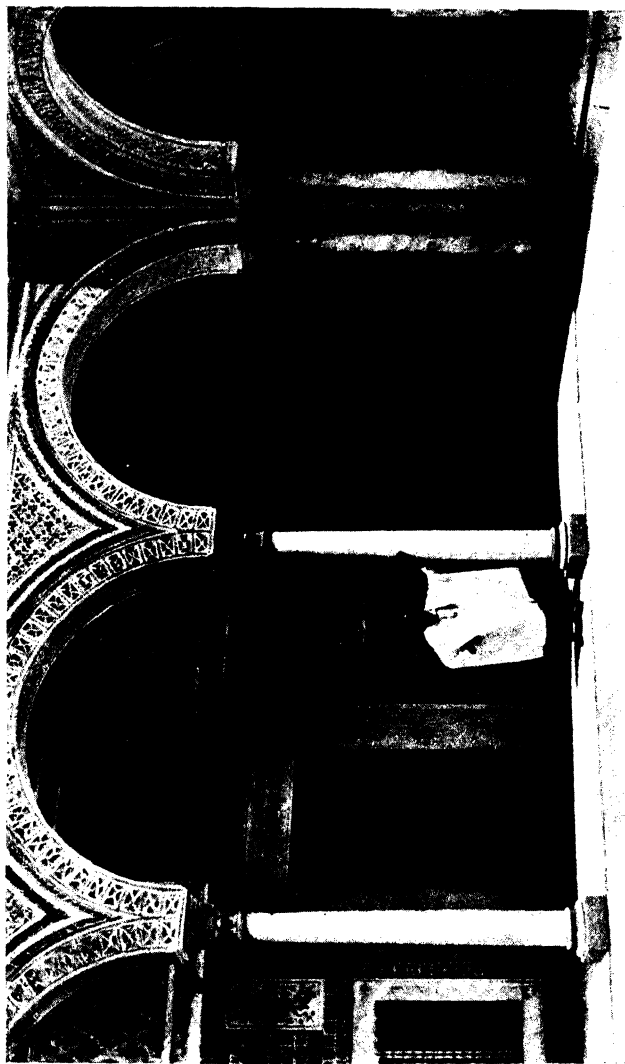


Photo Garrigues, Tunis

THE PATIO OF DAR HUSSEIN, TUNIS

three large and resplendent judges who sat humped up on their yellow-slipped feet on broad green-upholstered benches, surrounded by orange-yellows and lemon-yellows and grass-greens and almondeaf-greens and salmon-pinks. This mingling of greens of every shade from the pale pistachio-green to the strong Mohammedan grass-green, and the variety of yellows ranging from orange to pale canary and lemon, is typically Mohammedan. When my brain had found its focus I saw that Monsieur Ajeeb was standing beside his wife, a magnificent figure in white cloth, his flowing cloak and clothes richly embroidered and tasselled with silver, and that this scene I had come upon so suddenly signified that Sylvia Ajeeb was *standing before the Cadi*—that she was, in plain English, being divorced. When I realised all this I looked quickly round for Jack, and subconsciously for la petite Belge. But no, not another Christian garment spoilt the scene; Sylvia, in her grey cloud-like frock, stood alone.

The court-house was long and narrow and ran broadside with the courtyard. The walls were hung with grass-green cloth, and green silk covered the benches and luxurious cushions.

How Rutland Barrington would have enjoyed seeing those three Mohammedan judges, and how superbly he could have imitated any of them! They sat cross-legged on high green hassocks underneath highly coloured texts from the Koran, and in all my days I have never seen three graver, wiser, more dignified figures. And if you come to think of it, who but a Mohammedan could look dignified sitting cross-legged on a grass-green divan in an orange cloak, with a pair of yellow shoes turning up

their toes in his face. I half expected to see their mighty oft-folded turbans nod back and forward like the heads of the china mandarins you buy for ornaments. The supreme Cadi, or Sheik-ul-Islam, as he is called, sat on a similar green bench in a little green alcove at the end of the green room. *He* looked even more like a heathen god than the other two, and was still more gorgeously arrayed in salmon-pink and deep orange, and his lofty turban, my guide pointed out, had a vertical division right up the centre; this division of the folds signifies apostolic succession, so to speak. These coiled and towering white turbans give a very majestic and prophetic appearance to grave Eastern faces. Certainly these four wise men of the East looked as though the mantle of the Prophet had fallen upon them.

Have I in the faintest manner conveyed the picture to you? A vivid green room with nothing in it but the green-cushioned benches and the four stately turbaned figures seated on those benches in grave and awful silence, their orange draperies falling in long lines from their shoulders to the floor, their white-turbaned heads showing clearly against a background of grass-green. Their similarity to each other was intensified by the Paisley-patterned scarfs of the finest cashmere which hung round their necks, like parsons' stoles, and fell mingling with the orange draperies to the floor. I must own that, dainty and beautiful as Sylvia is, she looked totally insignificant beside these Eastern potentates of ecclesiastical justice. The long flowing lines of the Arabs' dress make Western fashions look foolish and vulgar.

With unchanging expressions they went on reading the

long legal documents which were rolled up just as all things that were written used to be rolled up in Biblical days. As they turned the roll round and round the parchment fell over their fine yellow slippers and almost touched the green carpet in front of them.

Poor little Sylvia, in her French frock and frills, was standing all this time in nervous silence before these sphinx-like representatives of the Prophet. She could not see me, for I was standing behind her, and I felt that at least it was better that she should not; but Mohammed, who was evidently a witness—of I don't know what—was standing close by her side with the most protecting look on his grave face.

I can't say if Sylvia's appearance before the Cadi had aroused any excitement amongst the people waiting outside—if it had, the agitation had subsided by the time I arrived upon the scene. Monsieur Ajeeb's lawyer, who had apparently handed the judge the written account of the case, was standing close to the bench and occasionally whispered something to him.

I asked my guide to tell me all that was taking place; he shook his head and dismissed the subject with the word "divorce."

"Will the case be finished to-day?" I said. "How long does a divorce case last?"

He did not know, but not long—perhaps only a few minutes if there were no complications, and if both parties were willing; but he was a Jew, so he did not really understand the proceedings.

"I know the lady," I said; "I am much interested."

"Yes, madame," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders;

"everyone in the souks knew that sooner or later she would stand before the Cadi. She has no children, she is cold and proud and not worth the expense of keeping; Monsieur Ajeeb finds more pleasure in buying new horses."

As I looked at the woman who was of no value, the woman that even this cadaverous-looking Jew considered beneath Monsieur Ajeeb, for the Christian is less tolerable to the Jew than a Mohammedan, I remembered the words of the desert man: "The East and West cannot mingle; oil and water cannot mix."

How long ago that eventful morning seemed!

Standing before these absurd yet dignified potentates, magnificent in their Biblical splendour, the English slimness and the English fairness of this discarded wife seemed pathetically out of keeping.

She seemed to me a creature of a different species, and more than ever I felt the horror of the fact that she had been the wife of a burnoused and turbaned Moor for two years. But if the Cadi before whom she was standing had any thoughts upon the subject he did not show it by the lifting of even an eyelash. I wondered if he would ever stop reading the document he held in his hand. Anxiously I watched the roll grow thinner and thinner and the coil on the floor in front of him grow bigger and bigger.

Would he never speak!

Sylvia, whose hands were clasped nervously in front of her, was standing with bowed head, and her eyes on the green carpet at her feet.

I fancy it is a very simple matter to obtain a divorce on the grounds which Monsieur Ajeeb brought forward;

besides, Madame Ajeeb being a Christian must greatly have facilitated matters. For in spite of the fact that the Prophet had amongst his nine wives one who was a Christian, marriages with unbelievers are strongly denounced by Mohammedan theologians and authorities.

It is curious how soon one gets accustomed to the strangest sights. Only half-an-hour before, and I was breathless with surprise and dreadfully agitated, now as I stood watching Sylvia standing with folded hands before that yellow-robed judge I began to take it all for granted—I might have seen it all a hundred times before. And this shows that you cannot get back your first impressions, try as you will; that is why I agree with the Frenchman who said: "The materials for a book of impressions about any country ought to be written within the first fortnight." So trying was the perfect silence that I was beginning to look about for fresh interests. The text of the Koran on the wall opposite caught my eyes, and I kept repeating to myself the last prayer of the Prophet:

"Lord grant me pardon and join me to the companionship of light."

Outside this silent green tribunal of the Cadi I could see the beautiful courtyard filled with vibrating light. The black and white of the arches looked more black and white than ever by their contrast with the vivid colours within; the stucco-work of the colonnade hung like a veil of lace let down from heaven. It was a jewel stolen from *The Arabian Nights*, a jewel iridescent as an opal, which caught its vibrations of colour from the delicate tints of the richly clothed Arabs and Moors who were strolling about, document in hand, awaiting their turn.

How these Orientals love the soft harmonies of greys and mauves and spring greens and flesh tints! There is a fabric they wear which is almost similar to our moiré, a watered silk very thick and very rich. It has a mixture of wool in it, I suppose, as all Arab silks have: for, as I told you, the wearing of pure silk is forbidden; but it looks to the ordinary observer nothing more or less than the richest moiré. It is most costly. In the days of my ignorance, I little imagined that the large diamonds you see set in silver were real stones. I know now that the devout Arab is still *most* particular never to wear a pure gold ring or ornament, so he sets his most precious stones in silver. Monsieur Ajeeb occasionally wears one large diamond on his left hand set in silver. If Christ had only laid down some such laws, what a saving it would have been to English husbands!

I was standing just inside the wide-open door thinking these thoughts, for you must not imagine that this solemn little court had seats for the curious, as our London law courts have. No one was admitted into its sacred precincts but the three judges and the Sheik-ul-Islam, who sat apart in this holy of holies, and the four or five people connected with the case.

At last the judge before whom Madame Ajeeb was standing said something which made Monsieur Ajeeb motion to her to pass along to where the Sheik-ul-Islam was seated. I was longing to catch Mohammed's eye, but he was far too much occupied with the work in hand to look for me.

As Sylvia walked slowly in front of her divorcing lord to the little green-curtained canopy which shut off the representative of Mohammed from the vulgar gaze of men,

I quickly left my place at the door and passed along the colonnade until I stood just outside this sacred cubicle, which also had an open front, and where I could see all that went on. The Sheik-ul-Islam may have seen that Englishwoman approaching, and no doubt he was well advised of her coming, but not a muscle of his face moved nor a fold of his flowing salmon-tinted robes stirred, and not for one instant did he raise his eyes from the parchment he held in his beautiful hands.

The perfect calm of his attitude suggested the repose of a Buddha. You felt instinctively that the judgment of this representative of the Prophet would be a just judgment—the dignity of his features, with their expression of indifference, set him above all briberies or petty partiality. Here was a great man so far removed from the common herd that he must have impressed even the most unimpressible. Justice seemed to emanate from every fold of his falling robe and to lie in each roll of his turban.

Perhaps Sylvia felt his greatness and was strengthened by the contact of such a personality, for I noticed that her drooping attitude changed, and she stood proudly erect, with her head thrown up and her eyes fixed on the bearded face of the sheik.

And who can say if those eyes, "like pools in the desert," affected that wise man of the East, for suddenly he also raised his head from the document he was studying and fixed his far-seeing eyes on the face of the Englishwoman in front of him. And it was well that he looked at her when he did, for it chanced to be one of Sylvia's supreme moments.

Still gazing at her, just as the man of the desert had

gazed at her, and as though he could read on the whiteness of her soul all the thoughts that Allah alone knows, the Sheik-ul-Islam asked first Monsieur Ajeeb and then his lawyer a few brief questions. Then twice he addressed Sylvia, prefacing all his questions with the familiar word "Bismillah !" ("In the name of the Lord"). This sentence begins every written document, and is the opening sentence of every Mohammedan book.

I waited for Sylvia's answer just as one waits for the response of a bride at the altar. What she said I did not understand, but the words were quite audible to everyone, and apparently her answers satisfied the sheik, for he held up his hand as a signal for dismissal ; the case was finished.

* * * * *

Monsieur Ajeeb was thus easily and almost silently relieved of his wife, and Sylvia was a free woman. I wish I could have understood what the sheik said to Monsieur Ajeeb, for I am sure he gave him a grave admonition. To Sylvia he gave his blessing, for I caught the words "Selam-a'-Alek !" ("The peace (of Allah) be with thee").

When Sylvia reached the door and stepped across the colonnade and found herself once more in the fierce sunlight of the courtyard she turned to her late husband, and I heard her say, in tones that fell like drops of ice from her lips :

"We have both the same God, and to-day I thank Him with all my heart, as I have thanked Him for more than a year, that He denied you *even a daughter*. If He had answered *your* prayers, and I had borne you children, I should to-day still have been your wife. As a childless wife I was merely an encumbrance. As your childless wife I

had only myself to despise, and God knows I did that utterly; as the mother of your children, I should have had your children to despise also."

Then turning impulsively to Mohammed she held out both her hands, and for one moment that devout soul anticipated Paradise.

I was longing to offer her my congratulations, but I felt that this hour was Mohammed's; that he alone deserved her silent gratitude; that he alone ought to see the birth of hope in those eyes.

If words were spoken between them I didn't hear them, and I fancy not.

So I stood in the shade of the black-and-white colonnade and watched Sylvia Lestrangle walk out into the sunlight. Mohammed was taking her I knew not where, but I knew that his beautiful lady was sacred in his eyes. How glad I was that at last he was reaping his reward! Of course there was no thought in the man's heart but of the humblest devotion. He was merely her paid servant: his happiness was derived from the fact that he could be near her to help her.

"The fate of every man is about his neck." His love for this Englishwoman was Kismet. He accepted it in all its helplessness as sent from Allah. "God's decrees overtake His creatures."

And now, dear, that is all I have to tell you about Sylvia. As for Jack, I have not seen him. *Good taste*, I think, took him on a visit to Biskra for two days. Sylvia is delightfully ignorant of the fact that Monsieur Ajeeb is the richer by £1000 for this little transaction in the court of the Cadi. She only knows that she gladly accepted his

proposal to be divorced without demanding the usual compensating dowry.

I will send you a line from Marseilles to tell you when to expect me. I shall rest there for a day, and then travel straight to England, so that a letter posted on my arrival at Marseilles ought to anticipate me by a good twenty-four hours.

To-morrow I shall be packing and bidding farewell to all my pet portions of the souks, and of course I must see Sylvia and learn her plans.

As I sit facing that now familiar square, it seems incredible that one day's journey by sea will lift me straight out of the Book of Genesis into bourgeois Marseilles. There is certainly nothing bourgeois about the children of Allah, even when they are like Monsieur Ajeeb. It seems strange that religion should so affect our breeding; but it does, for the fact remains that Mohammedans are as a rule sincere, and nothing that is truly sincere can be wholly vulgar.

Yours,
DORIS.

CHAPTER XIX

ON BOARD THE STEAMER
EN ROUTE FOR MARSEILLES

DEAREST HUSBAND,

In less than two days I shall be able to introduce you to Sylvia, and very soon, I hope, to la petite Belge, who is at this moment making the whole saloonful of people laugh so heartily that I can't write sensibly. We are all here!—Jack, Mohammed, Sylvia, and the Angry Saxon and la Belge, and we feel very much, I can assure you, as though we ought to join hands and bow to the audience before the curtain drops.

I knew last night that Sylvia was coming with me, for the good Mohammed brought her to my hotel and presented her to me, as though he were her godfather, as "Madame Sylvia Lestrangle." He did not know that I had seen all the proceedings in the divorce court, and for once his face was positively wreathed with smiles and his expression was almost as beatific as Achmet's.

Sylvia was in a dream! She could not realise that she was free for ever from the mastership of Monsieur Ajeeb. Very soon, I hope, these two *Tunis years* will seem to her like a dream.

When I told her that I was starting for England in the morning, she woke up. "Don't! oh, please don't leave me!" she said; there was terror in her cry.

"Then get ready and come with me," I said. "I must

go, my husband expects me, and I really can't stay away from him any longer."

She blushed to the roots of her hair, but remained silent.

"There is nothing to keep you in Tunis now, surely? You can pack all you need—there is to-night and to-morrow morning."

"There is nothing to keep me in Tunis," she said—"that is, very little, but there is also nothing to take me away. You do not understand. . . . I have no . . . no money."

I laughed. "Don't, dear, be so tragic over the price of a ticket from Tunis to London. I have not spent everything in the bazaars. I have more than enough for both. . . . No, you needn't hesitate, for I will remind you of your debt some day, when you are richer than I am."

A flood of colour turned her pale face crimson.

"Thank you," she said very simply; "I don't know why you are all so good to a woman whom you ought to despise."

I turned to Mohammed, whose face was once more as expressionless as a mask. "*You* can help Madame Ajeeb," I said ("Oh, I beg your pardon, Sylvia")—"Madame Lestrangle, I mean, to get ready . . . and please persuade her that it is right for her to come . . . that she must leave Tunis at once. *You can* manage it all, I know, for if I asked you to pack up the grand mosque, I believe you would accomplish it."

"Yes, madame, it can be done; I will give Madame Lestrangle all the help she requires." His serious eyes met Sylvia's protesting ones. "Madame," he said, "do you remember the words of the desert man, 'If help

comes to you from one of your own country, take it—it is sent from God ’? ”

“ But, Mohammed, how can I? You know only too well that I owe money. I can’t leave Tunis until I have paid you. It is almost arranged that I am to act as governess and housekeeper to a French family.”

Mohammed put up a slender hand.

“ No, Mohammed,” she said. “ I must speak. You have been *too* good, *too* kind! Don’t imagine I think money could ever repay what you have done for me. Your goodness helps me to forgive all that I have suffered from one of your countrymen. How *can* I show you my gratitude? ”

“ I have seen it, madame . . . it has filled my heart for many days. It will live there always.”

I turned to the window, and Sylvia continued her conversation in Arabic.

In a few moments Mohammed came up to me. “ She is going with you, madame,” he said.

I was freeing a fly from a spider’s web, his hand touched my arm. “ Spare it, madame.”

I looked at him quickly. His voice had betrayed emotion.

“ Spare which? ” I said, trying to speak lightly: “ the fly or the spider’s web? ”

“ The web,” he said, with perfect mastery over his voice.

“ But why? It has trapped the fly! ”

“ A spider’s web once saved the Prophet’s life.”

“ Saved the Prophet’s life? ”

“ Yes, while he lay for three days concealed in a cavern on Mount Thor, during the flight, a spider wove its web right across the mouth of the cave; when the Kuraish

pursuers came to the cave they passed it by, for a pigeon had also built its nest close to the entrance, and was sitting on it. When the Prophet's enemies saw the spider's web and the nesting pigeon they said to themselves: "The solitude of the place is undisturbed; he cannot be in the cave."

"Have the faithful spared all spiders' webs ever since? . . . What about spring cleaning?" I said to myself.

Sylvia, who had been listening to our conversation, said: "It is quite the prettiest of all the legends connected with the flight."

"And it shows," I said, "what seemingly unimportant things affect the history of the world."

"The smallest act is a spoke in the wheel of fate," Mohammed said. "Do you remember, madame," he asked, addressing me, "dropping that bunch of red roses into Madame Lestrangle's lap on the night of the Birthday of the Prophet?"

"I remember quite well," I said, "that it was what I should call mere chance that took me to the bazaars at all that night: it was the coming of Jack. You would call it fate."

"The end of your sorrow, madame" (he was speaking to Sylvia now), "was prearranged long before any of us met each other; we could not help ourselves: we were merely fulfilling our parts."

"Just as that particular spider was preordained to weave its web across the cave on Mount Thor and to save the Prophet's life?"

Mohammed bowed.

"No, no, Mohammed," Sylvia cried impulsively, "I

have believed too much in your 'fate' already . . . from to-day I shake it off. You would have me believe that it was preordained that you were to be good and kind to me, to me a despised Christian. If that were so I need not feel grateful to your own generous self, because you could not help yourself, I suppose. I ought to thank God *only* for all that has happened, and accept you merely as His instrument . . . but I *don't*; it is you, Mohammed—you, my dear, kind, human friend—whom I thank."

Tears were in Mohammed's eyes.

"He knows His instruments are very human, madame. Even the Prophet had to plead his own frailty often."

* * * * *

As I write these words the instruments do seem very human indeed. Jack and Sylvia are partners in a game of bridge against the Angry Saxon and la petite Belge.

The Angry Saxon is angrier than usual, for his wife will spoil the game by reciting how at the very last moment she managed to give Monsieur Ajeeb the slip. At first I thought Sylvia would feel embarrassed when the subject of Monsieur Ajeeb was discussed. But la Belge was much wiser, and saw at a glance that the simplest way out of the difficulty was to be perfectly simple about the whole thing; and to my surprise she has succeeded in making Sylvia laugh more than once over the descriptions of the earthly paradise she pictured to Monsieur Ajeeb, with herself as the leading lady, when once he had got rid of his English wife. But really, dear, la petite Belge could make a tombstone titter.

Sylvia and I were the first to come on board the steamer,

and both of us were mightily surprised when we saw la petite Belge and her husband seated in a cab driving slowly behind another cab, piled high with luggage, coming towards the pier. A little later Jack and Mohammed put in their appearance. The latter is coming home to England as Jack's personal servant. He is travelling second class, of course, so I have seen little of him. Jack says that there was nothing said in words between them about the matter, but that he found Mohammed quietly waiting for him outside his hotel, with all his personal belongings. He at once took Jack under his protection and installed himself as his valet and dragoman. What he means to do in England you may guess.

This morning it is rough and cold, and we are all feeling very far indeed from "The Burnous of the Prophet." There is no beauty anywhere; all the world is grey and sunless. Only last night, as we steamed away from Tunis in the evening light, there was so much beauty over land and sea that even our own absorbing personal interests were very small beer indeed—so small that they shrank back and completely effaced themselves as we strained our eyes to catch the last glimpse of the long headland of Carthage, and St Louis Cathedral, and the twin peaks of Bou-Cornein bathed in the flame of fire from the slowly sinking African sun.

Only the hours of one night have passed, and yet they seem to have taken me across the world. How absurdly unreal and far removed from everyday life all that was *quite* everyday and real in Tunis seems now. As I look at Sylvia, playing bridge in this very Frenchly upholstered ship's saloon, I can't help wondering if I have ever been to

Tunis, and if Tunis is really as I saw it. Does the sense of unreality ever unnerve you?"

"Oh, Tunis!" the ordinary traveller says who has not been there, and shrugs his shoulders—"Tunis! Tunis is quite French, isn't it?" Well, all I can answer is—let him go and see. And here I may add that there is a passenger on board this steamer who has lived for many years in the East; he was in Persia for some time; he has been far into the interior of Morocco; he knows Egypt well, and also Turkey, and yet he says that "to look at" (that is how he expressed it) Tunis is the most Oriental city he has ever seen. And after all, the ordinary tourist who visits the East has to satisfy himself with looking. The inner life of the people he has little or no chance of studying, and if he has he will never really understand it. He will still be merely an onlooker.

* * * * *

One more thing, dear, I must add before popping this letter into the box at the top of the companion stairs, and that is that just as I was stepping on board who should come up and touch me on the arm but sun-kissed Mabruka. She held a little packet in her hands as tightly and importantly as a child holds its first penny.

After she had greeted me she pushed it into my hand, asking my Jew dragoman, as she did so, to tell me that I was not to open it until I had lost sight of the land.

I put some small silver coins into her baby's claw-like hand and promised not to look at the souvenir until the twin peaks of Bou-Cornein had slipped behind the horizon.

The little parcel contained a black amulet made of compressed herbs, an exact counterpart of the one I had

restored to her. This, I think, was a very charming thought of the Bedouin girl.

* * * * *

And so my last memory of Tunis will always be the smiling face of Mabrucka, her erect young body standing in the sunlight at the edge of the wharf, watching our ship drift farther and farther down the blue gulf.

But Jack and Mohammed together have paid her so well for all that she did for them in connection with Sylvia that I fear Mabrucka will cease to tend her master's camels and till her master's land and cut her master's crops. Her brown fingers will no longer serve his savoury evening meal of steaming kous-kous, for she is now rich enough to live in solemn splendour in a whitewashed adobe instead of in a low black tent. Yet I can't imagine that child of the desert accepting for long the swank of respectability. Allah will guide her to the vastness again.

* * * * *

Oh! my dear, how surely I am passing from the land of mosques and burnouses to the land of bridge and blouses! Every throb of the engine seems to beat the fact on my brain, while the ever-increasing coldness makes me physically conscious of the sad fact. But before I begin to grumble, Addio!

Yours,
DORIS.

P.S.—I have at last found out why an Arab always leaves a little tuft of hair on the top of his shaven head. It is for the lifting of him up to heaven. The Prophet considered the shaving of heads an unnecessary luxury, and although

he did not denounce the popular custom altogether he limited it to those who wear turbans, appeasing his conscience with the fact that to wear a turban *and* hair in a very hot climate is injurious to the health. By what shall a Christian be lifted up to heaven? By the tails of his dress-coat, think you, or by his banking-account?

